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MAKERS OF THE MODERN AGE

Edited by OSBERT BURDETT

LENIN



VLADIMIR-ILITCH OULIANOFF (LENIN)
Speaking through the microphone (a picture made in 1919)

MAKERS OF THE MODERN AGE

Edited by OSBERT BURDETT

LENIN

By

D. S. MIRSKY

Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur
verschieden *interpretiert*, es kommt aber
darauf an, sie zu *verändern*.

KARL MARK
(*Thesen über Feuerbach*)



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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THE general title of this series would have made a general introduction superfluous were it not that, as it happens, the first two volumes to be published chance to be portraits of statesmen and studies of political revolutions, one of which at any rate excites profound feelings in every country within its reach. The aim of the series, however, is not political or propagandist, and, while there is a certain piquancy in the contrast between the Turkish soldier and the Marxian Communist, the series is not limited to political fare. It has a welcome for all originators who have genuinely helped to make extraordinary changes in the world in which we are living, and its attitude, to this small class, is as comprehensive as that of the innkeeper who christened his inn 'The Open Arms.'

The problems have been to plan a series of compact books that shall omit no innovator of sufficient importance, shall include no pretender, however eminent, who has altered nothing, and to find writers with the appropriate balance of intimate knowledge with critical detachment.

If the series, in a reasonable compass, can be

completed on this strictly defined plan, every reader of the collection will possess a succinct but intelligible survey of the world-changes among which he is living. On perhaps a score of subjects, it does not matter where the survey begins, for only the co-operation of the public is needed to enable us eventually to cover the remainder of a varied, but definite, field. Wherever it had started, the series must have disclaimed a single form of change. Politics being one of the most important of questions, the series begins with two volumes dealing with the problems of dictatorship and mass rule.

O. B.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

It has been pointed out to me that, coming as it does from a member of the class that was most effectively eliminated by the great Russian Revolution, and adopting at the same time a pro-revolutionary standpoint, the present book calls for some explanation *pro domo sua*. To begin with, however, it must not be forgotten that by the eve of the Revolution the Russian squirearchy had reached such a state of cultural degeneracy that the mere fact of possessing a certain amount of intellectual culture 'unclassed' those of its members who possessed any, and dissociated them from their mother-class which had become incapable of having its own intelligentsia. This makes the participation of men of squirearchic families even in pre-revolutionary intellectual movements entirely fortuitous. In so far as they were intellectuals they were no longer members of the class they were born into. The fact that two or three members of what is sometimes miscalled the Russian 'aristocracy' took a more or less prominent part in the pro-Soviet movement which affected certain sections of the émigré intelligentsia is consequently to

a large extent irrelevant. The only additional reason which was capable of affecting them in a way in which it could not affect the bulk of the bourgeois intelligentsia may have been an inborn anti-bourgeois prejudice which may have contributed to their sympathies with a party that attacked the bourgeois from the opposite side.

There remains the larger fact that a considerable number of émigré intellectuals, whether of bourgeois or squirearchic origin who were non-political or vaguely conservative before, during, and for some time after, the Revolution have come, in a varying degree, to accept its ideals. It is obvious that this change of attitude was only rendered possible because the classes to which these intellectuals had belonged have ceased to exist, destroyed by the Revolution. The great majority of the former upper classes, including the majority of their intelligentsia, have preferred to cling to their old memories idealizing them in a way they would themselves have shrunk from formerly, or to amalgamate on a basis of more or less marked inferiority with the middle classes of Europe. But a minority have been able to profit by their having been thus 'un-classed,' and by the unsolicited opportunity of seeing European Capitalism not as guests, but as subjects, not as more or less moneyed tourists, but as more or less unemployed proletarians.

This new situation disposed them to a greater sympathy for the working than the employing

classes of the Capitalist world. But it was a consideration of a different kind that, in most individual cases, first led them to revise their originally hostile view of the Communist policy. It was sufficient for them to give relatively fair-play to their own intellectual honesty to be able to see that, whatever the Communists might be worth in their international function, as a Russian party they had preserved the independence of the country from foreign intervention, restored under a new name (it was not realized that the new name stood for a new entity) the geographical limits of the empire, and made of Russia a cultural and political force of universal significance. Before we became Internationalists we had come to understand that, whatever else they might be, the Communists who had vindicated the independence of a Workers' and Peasants' U.S.S.R. were better patriots than the 'national Russians' who had allied themselves with foreign Imperialism in return for help against their class enemy.

This patriotic acceptance of Soviet policy led us to a closer study of the Russian Revolution, of the personality of its leader, and of the State founded by him. Unescapably this forced us to realize that it was impossible to accept the October Revolution without accepting the idea that inspired it, and that 'the Soviets without Communism' and the 'U.S.S.R. without the Komintern'—formulae popular among us be-

tween 1925 and 1928—were self-contradictory and absurd. To recognize the unique greatness of Lenin had already become a commonplace among all the younger émigrés of good faith by 1925, and his personality was the most powerful single magnet that drew us nearer and nearer to Leninism. For my own part, however, I must acknowledge that it was only in the course of the present work—especially in the process of a systematic reading of his writings—that I was able to gauge the full extent of his greatness.

In what follows I have deliberately avoided all cheap or irrelevant appeal to the reader's good graces. I have envisaged Lenin as a 'maker of the modern world,' not as a hero of stunt biography. This may have made my book dull, but I hope, at least, it has preserved it from being frivolous. I have endeavoured to treat my subject with the seriousness demanded by it, for the issues on which Lenin fought are, as few readers will be inclined to contradict, the most serious thing in the world that is now in the making.

It must be emphasized, however, that this is a life of Lenin, not a history of the Russian Revolution. This is the reason why points of primary importance for the latter, such as the growth of the Red Army, the activity of the Cheka, the organization of industry, and especially the course of the Revolution in the provinces, are given little or no space.

May 1930

LENIN

CHAPTER I

THE STARTING-POINT

THE paradox of the Russian Revolution—of a proletarian Revolution occurring in a country of relatively undeveloped Capitalism—is the outcome of a somewhat peculiar historical situation. By the beginning of the twentieth century industrial Capitalism was already a dominant economic force in the country, and the industrial proletariat had reached a high degree of political maturity. But the social structure of the country was still in the main pre-capitalistic, the political power being still wielded by a grotesquely antiquated absolutism, the political expression of the landed interest of the former serf-owning gentry. The survival of this squirearchy obscured the growing class-differentiation of the peasantry, making of that social group a speciously uniform mass, oppressed, and devoid of civil rights. The political structure was such as to exclude from all political influence the bourgeois and *petit-bourgeois* intelligentsia, making of that stratum a permanently discontented and largely

revolutionary force. So, at the time when the industrial proletariat was looking ahead towards Socialism, the immediate task before it was the carrying out of a political Revolution for the conquest of bourgeois Democracy, a task in which the peasants and the intelligentsia were its natural allies, making possible a united front of all democratic forces against the antiquated and brutal oppression of Tsarism. The impetus given by the democratic revolution carried the proletariat—which was its most active agent—to a point whence it was possible to achieve that dictatorship which is the stepping-stone to Socialism. It is this situation—analysed and formulated by himself—that forms the background of the revolutionary work of Lenin, and which made him the leader simultaneously of the Workmen's and Peasants' Revolution in Russia, and of the international movement toward Socialism.

Lenin was primarily the leader of the Russian proletariat, and it is as their leader that he has passed into history. As a personality, too, he is much more representative of the class which he led to victory than of the democratic intelligentsia to which he belonged by birth. But the revolutionary successes of the Russian proletariat are inseparable from the fact that, from the moment when it attained to political maturity and became capable of playing its historical rôle, it found at its disposal a staff of trained revolu-

tionaries, of bourgeois and *petit-bourgeois* extraction, who had behind them a great tradition of heroic and implacable struggle against Tsarism, conducted, for more than a generation, by the élite of the democratic intelligentsia. It was just about the time when the revolutionary movement was beginning to make numerous recruits, and in a typical family of that class that the future leader of the proletarian Revolution was born.

Vladimir Ilyich Ul'yanov, who later became known by the name of Lenin, was born on 10th (22nd) April 1870 at Simbirsk, on the middle Volga. His father, Il'ya Nikolayevich Ul'yanov, inspector of primary schools of the province of Simbirsk, was a liberal civil servant. His wife, Maria Aleksandrovna, came from a family of small gentry and had a small estate in the province of Kazan, where the family spent part of their summers. The Ul'yanovs were not very different from thousands of families of the Russian intelligentsia, whose children formed the main bulk of pupils at the high schools and of students at the Universities. Neither was it particularly exceptional that the six Ul'yanov children, Alexander, Vladimir, Dimitri, Anna, Olga and Marie all grew up as revolutionaries. Olga died young from an infectious disease contracted in the course of her work as a medical student, but Dimitri, Anna (afterwards Elizarova) and Marie all grew to be more or less prominent members of the Social-Democratic and after-

wards of the Communist Party. Their revolutionary importance is both enhanced and eclipsed by the immense figure of Vladimir Ilyich. • But Alexander, the eldest of the six, has an independent and, as it were, symbolical place in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement. For he is the living link between the old revolutionaries of the pre-proletarian period and the great leader of the proletariat.

The fight of the early revolutionaries against Tsarism reached a climax in the assassination of Alexander II (1st March 1881), which frightened the liberal middle classes into reaction and inaugurated a reign of police terror that lasted till the revolutionary upheaval of 1905. For some time the terroristic movement continued to receive fresh recruits from the intelligentsia youth. The last of their desperate, but ineffective, attacks on the Government was the conspiracy formed in 1887 for the assassination of the Tsar (Alexander III) by a group of young men, the foremost of whom was Alexander Ul'yanov. They were arrested before their plans could materialize, tried and hanged. This was the last act of the old revolutionary movement. The new revolutionary movement was to become effective only when a new generation of revolutionary intellectuals, inspired by a new conception of Socialism, came in touch with the awakened workmen. The younger brother of Alexander Ul'yanov was to be its chief pioneer.

In the spring of 1887, when Alexander Ul'yanov was hanged, Vladimir was finishing his course of studies at the Simbirsk high school, where he was noted as a pupil of exceptional ability. The fate of his brother cast a shadow of 'political unreliability' on all the Ul'yanov family, which became submitted to a variety of vexations. However (partly owing to the influence of the headmaster, who, by a strange freak of chance happened to be the father of the subsequently notorious Kerensky), Vladimir Ilyich was permitted to pass the final examinations, and even to receive the first prize to which he was entitled. In the autumn of the same year he matriculated in the University of Kazan. In the following December there broke out at Kazan one of those 'student disturbances,' which in those days were practically the only expression of public discontent. Vladimir Ul'yanov's part in them was very inconspicuous, but the police remembered whose brother he was and, together with the principal ringleaders, he was expelled from the University and banished to his maternal grandfather's estate, Kokushkino, where his elder sister, Anna, was already living under police surveillance. All his requests that he should be allowed to re-enter the University or to go abroad were rejected by the police, until, in 1890, he was allowed at last to apply for examination as an external student. He chose Petersburg as the University in which to

be examined, and took his degree there in 1891. He was admitted to the Bar as 'assistant' to a barrister of the city of Samara, where his family was then living. He practised there for a little over a year. In September 1893 he moved to Petersburg, receiving admittance to the local Bar, but soon abandoned all legal practice, and devoted himself entirely to socialist propaganda.

It would be wrong to exaggerate the importance of the impression produced on Lenin by the fate of his brother. It was so normal a thing for a young man of the democratic intelligentsia to become a revolutionary, that the stimulus was hardly necessary, while on the other hand there is nothing in the personality of Alexander Ul'yanov that might explain the uniqueness of Vladimir Ul'yanov among other revolutionaries of intelligentsia extraction. Still the part of his elder brother in the formation of Lenin cannot be ignored, and it is largely owing to his death that Vladimir Ilyich came to Kazan already fully won to the cause of revolution. The memory of his brother always remained sacred for Lenin. It contributed to the veneration in which he held the revolutionaries of the Seventies and Eighties, though from the outset he repudiated their doctrines as well as their methods.

Those revolutionaries adhered to the doctrine of 'Narodnik' Socialism, which regarded the peasants as the chief revolutionary force and

maintained the necessity of bringing about a social revolution in Russia *before* capitalism had destroyed the peasant commune, which they believed to be the nucleus of a future Socialist society. Their views were tenable as long as the industrial development of the country was slow and the industrial working class passive and unconscious. But the great Morozov strike of 1885 (at Orekhovo-Zuyevo, near Moscow) forced even the Government to recognize the existence of a labour problem, and to introduce some rudimentary factory legislation. The rapid development of industrial enterprise in the late Eighties and Nineties made it finally impossible for revolutionaries to ignore the fact that Capitalism had come to stay. The ground was thus prepared for the reception of Marxism by the Russian Socialists.

The first foundations of a Russian workmen's party were laid in 1884 by a group of revolutionary émigrés, which included George Plekhanov, Paul Axelrod and Vera Zasulich. It adopted the name of Liberation of Labour Group (*Osvobozhdenie Truda*). In 1889 Plekhanov went as its delegate to the first congress of the Second International. There, in a speech that has become famous, he introduced the Russian workman to International Socialism. 'The Russian revolutionary movement,' he said, 'will be victorious as a revolutionary movement of workmen. There is and can be no other alternative.'

At the same time groups of Marxists began to spring up in various places in Russia. Ul'yanov, who first became acquainted with the work of Marx in 1888, when he spent most of his time at Kokushkino studying *Das Kapital*, joined the group founded in Kazan by N. E. Fedoseyev. After his return from Petersburg in 1891 he formed, with several other young intellectuals, a Marxist group in Samara. It was then that he began his literary activity with polemical papers against the Narodniks read at the meetings of the local group. One of these, a criticism of a book by a Narodnik writer on the economic state of the peasants in South Russia, has been preserved. It displays already that extraordinary wealth of concrete and precise information which is characteristic of all his subsequent work and which forms the very groundwork of his political vision.

But Marxist activities at Kazan and at Samara were only a preliminary theoretical training for the work to come, and could hardly be anything more, for at that time those cities were almost devoid of an industrial proletariat. It was only in Petersburg, after he came there in 1893, that Lenin came into touch with the working-class and became himself an active worker of the Revolution.

CHAPTER II

THE MAN

LENIN was a *zoon politikon* through and through. No one's life was more entirely political, more completely identified with one political task. His biography and the history of the Russian Revolution are inseparable, and he is more reducible to his work than any other man in history. In the chapters that follow I have deliberately avoided the 'human touch' and tried to present his life as the successive solution of the political problems that confronted, during that period of time, the leader of the Socialist Revolution. But before approaching this, the main subject of the book, it may be opportune to give an idea of his human personality as it struck those who knew him.

To explain the inability of his political friends to cope with Lenin, the *Menshevik* leader, Dan is reported to have said of him: 'there is no other man who is absorbed by the Revolution twenty-four hours a day, who has no other thoughts but the thought of Revolution, and who, even when he sleeps, dreams of nothing but the Revolution.' There is an obvious ex-

aggregation in these words, but an exaggeration in the right direction. An undue emphasis on the private life and personal relations of Lenin can only lead to a sentimentalized and castrated presentation of the man, a danger not entirely avoided even by so clever a writer as Maxim Gorky. The really human side of Lenin lies in his revolutionary work.

This is illustrated, among other things, by the history of his married life. It was primarily a working association between two revolutionaries. Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya met him as a fellow party-worker and became engaged to him with the practical purpose of acting as his liaison with the outer world, during his imprisonment of 1895-96. Throughout their married life she remained his closest collaborator, acting as secretary of the *Iskra* and having charge of the liaison technique between the émigré and the Russian organizations. It is in the remarkable *Recollections* of his widow that the human side of Lenin's personality is best shown. But in showing it, they make one realize, too, how absolutely inseparable it was from his work, and to what an extent the man was identical with the revolutionary.

Lenin was short, a reddish brunet, and bald from an early age. His face was typically Great-Russian, with a suggestion of the Tartar. The eyes, with their shrewd and mischievous ironic twinkle, were the feature that was remem-

bered best by all who met him. He had a defect of speech, being unable to roll his r's. His appearance was inconspicuous and prosaic. Two different writers, who first met him in Petersburg in 1905-6, speak of his producing on them the impression of an average tradesman or shop assistant of that city.

In his behaviour and his habits Lenin was the exact opposite of the typical Russian *intelligent*. His mode of life and the appearance of his lodging rather suggested those of an educated workman. Several writers speak of the strong contrast, during the London period of the *Iskra*, between the rooms where Lenin lived with his wife and mother-in-law, and those occupied by the 'commune' that harboured the other members of the editorial staff. The latter was always in a state of chaos. When the Petersburg workman, Babushkin, came to London on Party business and stopped at the 'commune,' he at once introduced order and tidiness. 'A Russian *intelligent's* home is always filthy—he wants servants to keep him tidy and cannot manage by himself,' he said.¹ But Lenin's rooms, whether in London or Paris or elsewhere, were always neat and tidy, his papers and his books in as perfect order as the kitchen. His working habits were as orderly as the appearance of his lodgings. He worked regularly and, until the time when the Revolution heaped on

¹ Krupskaya, *Recollections*, p. 79.

him mountains of urgent business that could not be shirked, did what he could to counteract the effects of sedentary work by physical exercise.

For the greater part of his life he lived on a salary paid to him, as editor of the Party paper or as Member of the Central Committee, from the Party funds. This was always very moderate. He insisted on the principle, proclaimed by the Paris Commune, of equal payment for intellectual and for manual labour, and it was owing to him that Members of the Central Committee were paid no better than the compositors of the Party Press. Though his income was never more than moderate, he was never entirely destitute. 'Such poverty,' says Krupskaya, 'as when one has not wherewithal to buy one's bread, we never knew. . . . Our life, it is true, was simple. But does the joy of life consist in eating one's fill and living in luxury? Vladimir Ilyich knew how to take pleasure from life.'¹ When he became the head of the Russian Government, he insisted on the same principle that no State employee should be paid better than an average skilled workman.² His life remained as simple and as inexpensive as it had always been. The only relaxation he allowed himself was that of spending part of his time in

¹ *O Lenin*, i. p. 36.

² Since the Nep this rule applies only to members of the Party.

a country house near Moscow and of occasionally going out shooting.

He never indulged in any kind of luxury. He drank no wine, and at one time ate no meat. But he ridiculed the idea of refusing to do so on principle. He did so from inclination and to keep fit. Very keen on self-discipline, he was explicitly averse to all forms of asceticism, and very tolerant with others. He never interfered with the personal habits of his fellow workers, except to urge them to take more exercise and not to pass their whole life in talking.

He was fond of outdoor life, and this enabled him to enjoy his term of exile in Siberia. He was passionately fond of shooting. Between 1900 and 1918 he had no opportunities for doing so. But when he became head of the Government a shooting expedition in the environs of Moscow was the only thing that was capable of giving him rest. For he was incapable of keeping his mind unoccupied; mere inaction could not empty it of the cares of Government; the only way of driving them out for a brief space of time was to replace them by something else which would really rivet his attention. During his life abroad he spent as much time as he could possibly afford out of doors and in the country. In Paris he took to bicycling. In Switzerland and Galicia he went out on long walks into the mountains, forcing his less

physically inclined comrades to come with him, sometimes much against their inclination.

He was still more different from the usual type of Russian *intelligent* of his generation in his organic aversion to useless talk. Talking for him was a means and not an end, and he tolerated it only in so far as it was necessary for his work. He never took part in those interminable and fruitless disputations which so many of his comrades liked to carry into the small hours of the following day. But he loved the atmosphere of struggle when the results of the discussion were clear and palpable. Krupskaya quotes as exceedingly illuminating the following passage from one of his anti-Menshevik writings of 1904 :

‘I cannot help recalling in this connection one of my conversations with a delegate of the “centre.”¹ “How heavy is this atmosphere that dominates the congress,” he complained to me. “All this embittered strife, this agitation against each other, these rude polemics, these uncomradely relations.” “What a splendid thing our congress is,” I answered him. “Free and open struggle. Opinions are formulated ; shades of meaning made clear ; groups are formed ; hands raised ; the vote taken. The stage is passed.

¹ That is, a future Menshevik ; the Left being formed by the future Bolsheviks, the Right by the Economists.

Forward! This is what I understand! This is life! None of your endless, dreary *intelligentsia* disputations, which do not end because you have found any answer to the questions raised, but only because you have got tired of talking." The comrade from the "centre" looked at me with astonished eyes and shrugged his shoulders. We spoke different languages.¹

This disinclination for useless talk was closely connected with an equal aversion for that psychological rummaging in the minds and hearts of other people, of which the intellectuals were so fond. Lenin's understanding of other people was profound and acute, and by no means lacking in emotional overtones, but it was discreet. The atmosphere in which the revolutionary intellectuals lived in Siberia and abroad was poisoned by this intense interest in each other's intimate and personal affairs and by a constant itch to judge and value each other from moral points of view. Lenin disliked such valuations and regarded them as irrelevant and useless. Once, to a remark about someone that he was not a good man, he retorted: 'And will you please define your idea of a good man?' In his aversion to the mutual rummagings of the intellectuals, there

¹ *Works*, v. p. 424; quoted in Krupskaya, *Recollections*, pp. 96-97.

was a solid background of moral delicacy and human respect.

‘There was nothing Vladimir Ilyich despised more than any kind of gossip and meddling with another’s private life. He regarded such interference as inadmissible. When we lived in Siberia he often spoke of this. He insisted on keeping carefully aloof from all those incidents between exiles, that thrive on gossip, on the habit of reading in each other’s hearts and on idle curiosity. . . . In London in 1902 he had a sharp conflict with part of the editorial committee of the *Iskra*, who wished to institute an inquiry into the allegedly unsatisfactory behaviour of one of our comrades in Siberia. The inquiry necessarily implied a rude interference into his private life. V. I. strongly protested against the whole business, flatly refusing to take part in the disgraceful procedure, as he called it. He was subsequently accused of lack of responsiveness.’¹

Lenin’s judgment of people was primarily conditioned by their political worth. There was nothing more painful to him than the spectacle of a renegade revolutionary. When in 1917 the Menshevik minister Tseretelli (who had, under Tsarism, undergone a sentence of penal servitude

¹ Krupskaya in *O Lenin*, i. p. 41.

and deportation for his revolutionary work in the Second Duma) made a particularly anti-revolutionary speech, threatening to disarm the Petersburg workmen, Lenin remarked in the course of a conversation: 'And to think that he was a revolutionary! All those years of penal servitude and now this complete apostasy from his past.' 'These words,' says Trotsky, who records them, 'contained no political idea and were said with no political intention, but were just a passing thought over the pitiful fate of one who had in his time been a revolutionary leader. There was in his tone a shade of pity and of offended feeling, but expressed briefly and dryly, for nothing was more distasteful to Lenin than even the slightest hint of sentimentality and psychological wish-wash.'¹

If Lenin's relations with people were conditioned by their relation to his revolutionary work and unaffected by his personal sentiments, these latter were not necessarily affected by changes in behaviour. When political dissensions with former comrades made it impossible for him to continue his political collaboration with them, this unavoidably led to a cessation of personal relations, but it did not always kill his human feelings.

'His personal affections for people,' says Krupskaya, 'made these political ruptures in-

¹ Trotsky, *O Lenin*, p. 58.

credibly painful. I remember how at the Second Congress, when it became clear that a break with Axelrod, Zasulich and Martov was inevitable, how miserable Vladimir Ilyich felt. For a whole night we sat up, he and I, shivering. Had he not been so passionate in his attachments, he would have lived longer.¹ On his deathbed he inquired about his old comrade and enemy, Martov, who was also approaching his death, 'and there was a note of tenderness in his words.'² But no degree of attachment affected his behaviour. Of all the younger generation of Bolsheviks of 1905, he had a particular weakness for Lunacharsky. This did not prevent Lenin from breaking all relations with him when Lunacharsky's propaganda of 'God-building' reached a stage that was no longer consonant with revolutionary Marxism. But this intransigence extended only to responsible political leaders. With workmen, peasants and soldiers, with the rank and file of the party, he was invariably patient and tolerant, confident that 'blood will out' and that the organic revolutionary instincts of the people may be relied upon. He was equally patient and tolerant with men whose main business was not politics. Thus his friendship with Gorky was not put an end to when the latter supported Lunacharsky in his 'religious' propaganda. Lenin was ready to make allowances for the subconscious and ir-

¹ Krupskaya in *O Lenin*, i. p. 40.

² *Ibid.*, p. 39.

rational ways of the imaginative writer. But he did not mince his words in telling Gorky exactly what he thought of the whole business.

Lenin has been accused by his enemies, Menshevik and bourgeois, of love of power. But what may be mistaken in him for 'love of power' was merely his intense attachment to the cause of Revolution and the consciousness that he himself was more likely than any other comrade to know what was best to forward it. This consciousness was inescapable for Lenin: he was a man who learned by experience, and he could not help seeing that the courses he had advocated had been in agreement with the interests of the cause, and that those he opposed almost inevitably led to apostasy and opportunism. Being more observant than other people he drew his conclusions earlier, but the same conclusions were inevitably drawn by all party workers. In 1917-18 there was still a strong intra-party opposition to many of his policies, but, after his policy of armed insurrection and of peace with Germany at any cost turned out to be obviously right, the leaders of the opposition—Kamenev, who had opposed the April theses and the October policy in 1917, and Bukharin, the leader of the 'Left Communists' in March 1918—became the most convinced believers in his political infallibility. The belief became a universal conviction in the Party. Lenin himself never regarded himself as infallible.

As a rule, it was only events that changed his policies by introducing new situations requiring a new dialectical response. But Lenin was by no means deaf to argument : when—this did not often happen, but did happen occasionally—an opponent was able to convince him of his point of view, he changed his own ungrudgingly.

Lenin was forced to an intense exercise of power and authority by the mere fact of his intellectual superiority. But he was entirely free from personal ambition, indeed from every form of egotism. It seems almost superfluous to say that he was entirely free from individualism, introspectiveness or narcissism. We cannot imagine him absorbed in studying his own soul ; we cannot even imagine him writing an autobiography. He studied his own past only in so far as it was necessary for his future work, and in so far as his own solution of political problems was material for the construction of a general theory of Revolutionary policy.

In his relations with people, Lenin was entirely devoid of self-importance or of the arrogance and superiority so often displayed by 'great men.' In this respect he was the exact opposite of Plekhanov, who, to all disagreeable questions put to him by younger comrades, would answer : 'When your papa was paying court to your mamma, I was already a Socialist.' Countless memoir writers have recorded impressions of their first meeting with Lenin, always the same

—the awe and apprehension they felt for the great party leader before they met him; the surprise at finding him as he was, not at first unmixed with disappointment at so prosy-looking a revolutionary; the ease, confidence and feeling of comradeship which came after the first exchange of words. He hated all ostentation and all outward display. He had no sentimental attachment for symbols. When, before the removal of the capital to Moscow, some comrades opposed it on the ground that the Smolny, the Petrograd headquarters of the party, had become to the people a sacred symbol of the Revolution, he retorted that it had become so 'only because we occupied it. When we are in the Kremlin, the Kremlin will become quite as sacred.'

There was much that was intensely Russian in Lenin's characteristics. His sober self-discipline and dislike of ostentation were those of the Russian workman, his shrewdness and common-sense related him to the Great-Russian peasant. But for all his attachment to the Russian workman and to the Russian peasant, Lenin was constitutionally an Internationalist. He did not, during his life abroad, mix with Western intellectuals, and when, after his victory, such intellectuals flocked to Moscow to see the new celebrity, they were unable to find a common language with him—and he did not even try to. Only the ironic twinkle in his eye,

as they proceeded to interview him, grew keener and keener. 'What a Philistine' was his only comment on Mr H. G. Wells. But with the Western workmen he came in close touch. His party work left him little time for this while he lived in London and Paris. Only between working hours could he study as an outside observer the street and public life of London, and especially of the East End. But in Switzerland during the war, when he had more leisure, he engaged in regular propaganda work among the young workmen of Zurich and Berne, winning their affection as surely as he had won that of the Petersburg workmen, and was soon to win that of the Russian peasants.

So single-minded a revolutionary as Lenin could not have much attachment for what goes by the name of 'cultural values.' As a Marxist he held that all such values were only the secondary products of the civilization produced by a definite class, and bore the indelible impress of that class. The 'cultural values' of the past and present were all the expression of a civilization of exploiters. They might be preserved for the future in so far as they might be utilized to serve the needs of the victorious proletariat and of classless Socialist society. There was no necessity of wantonly destroying them, but they had no value in themselves, and he had no patience with the fetishism of culture. He treated Lunacharsky with withering contempt

when that literary man, in a fit of hysteria, produced by some slight damage done to the Kremlin towers by the Bolshevik guns, resigned his post of Commissar. There was no common measure between the victory of the Revolution, be it only in one town, and the damage caused by it to ever so many old stones. While abroad Lenin never went to any museums and galleries ; the only exception was the Museum of the Revolution of 1848 in Paris. But his attitude to the *knowledge* accumulated by past ages was quite different, and in the Reading Room of the British Museum he was an assiduous guest. His philosophical education was considerable, and he knew the classics of philosophy as well as he did Marx and Engels. He had the greatest respect for the predecessors of the Revolution, the Enlighteners of the eighteenth century and the pre-scientific Socialists, especially for the greatest of the Russian Narodniks, Chernyshevsky. He recognized the supreme value of the scientific and technical civilization created by Capitalism, and was never tired of repeating that Socialism could only triumph after it had assimilated all these invaluable achievements of the bourgeoisie.

He was not a man of literary culture, as Marx, Plekhanov or Trotsky were. His appreciations were largely practical, and based on the political value of literary work. He was, for instance, very fond of the popular French *chansonnier*, Montéhus, whose revolutionary songs kindled

the proletarian audiences of the East and South of Paris. But political considerations were not alone in moulding his preferences. His favourites among the Russian classics were Pushkin, Nekrasov and Tolstoy. He liked Pushkin for his sanity and sober humanism; Nekrasov for his plebeian rudeness and his passionate sympathy with the oppressed masses; Tolstoy for his realism, his absence of rhetoric and his penetrating understanding of the mechanism of human behaviour. In his literary tastes he was old-fashioned, which is to say that he liked the sober and transparent realism of the nineteenth-century Russians. He had no taste for 'left wing' literature and art, and preferred Pushkin to the Communist poetry of the Futurist Mayakovsky. But he never erected his likes and dislikes into a theory, and never implied that his aversion for 'modern' literature was anything but merely subjective. On the other hand, he was keenly interested in the Cinema, which he regarded as the most significant of the Arts for Russia. But he did not live to see his judgment so remarkably confirmed by the young school of Soviet producers.

As a writer Lenin was not in the least a 'man of letters.' His attitude to his writings was strictly utilitarian. Not only did he never write except when he had something to say that was necessary for the cause, he never admitted into his writings anything that was not strictly rele-

vant to his argument. There is no trace of fine writing in all the twenty volumes of Lenin's collected works. Neither is there any trace of those irrelevant journalistic flourishes that mar so much of Russian political journalism—and not least the writings of Plekhanov. A severe matter-of-factness reigns in all he wrote. He was a sworn enemy of rhetoric, and never failed to hold it up to scorn when reviewing the writings even of his nearest friends. His dislike of rhetoric was part and parcel of his general dislike of overstatement, of 'Left phrases,' and of revolutionary *emphase*. He is perhaps the only revolutionary writer who never said more than he meant. If this still leaves him the most powerful of revolutionary writers, it is because he meant a great deal.

His aversion for every kind of loose and slipshod wording was as great as his aversion for rhetorical ornament. Their absence makes his prose intensely workmanlike. Together with Tolstoy's, it is the most adequate prose in the language. But even in this perfection Lenin was not in the least literary, and the difference between the studied and æsthetic simplicity of Tolstoy and the practical simplicity of Lenin is very great, as great as the difference between an elegant yacht and an efficient engine. His vocabulary is colourless, and its choice is directed by no æsthetic motive, only by the demands of precision and intelligibility. The sentences are

not linked by any dominating rhythm, but by the logic of the argument. He is never needlessly prolix, but he is never afraid of repetition. The æsthetic bogey of 'economy of means' never haunted him. He would repeat the same idea over and over again, turning it round from every side until it was indelibly stamped on the reader's mind. This is still more true of his spoken work, for he knew that repetition was one of the most potent instruments of conviction.

If Lenin is a very 'quotable' author, it is, first of all, because he is a great coiner of formulas, whose value is in their complete dialectical adequacy to the situation that produced them. It is also because of his occasional power of vivid simile, which he never uses except in a purely prosaic way as concrete illustrations of abstract argument. Last but not least, it is because of those parentheses and footnotes which at times interrupt the flow of his speech, to mark the starting-point of another line of argument that could not be developed on this occasion, but was intrinsically important and worth calling attention to. These rapid flashlights have sometimes an extraordinary condensation of thought and unusual suggestiveness. The reader of Lenin must be well on his guard against skipping the footnotes.

The entirely unliterary excellence of Lenin's style can only be fully gauged after one has (as the present writer has in the course of his work

upon this book) passed a lengthy period of time in reading nothing but Lenin. The shock with which one returns to other authors, to find them loose, slipshod, vague and meretricious, makes one realize his uniqueness as a writer.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF THE PARTY

(1893-1904)

THE active career of Lenin falls very clearly into two phases, the dividing point being his arrival in Petrograd in April 1917. It was only then that he could turn to the actual leadership of masses, and that his name became known from one end of the world to the other. The preceding twenty-four years, 1893-1917, were a period of patient, more or less 'underground,' preparation during which he was directly known only to a relatively narrow circle of active revolutionaries. Inside this preparatory period we may distinguish two principal stages, a Russian and an international. They are unequal in length of time, for the latter begins only with the outbreak of the Great War. Throughout the former, Lenin was entirely absorbed by the task of bringing up the Russian proletariat to its rôle of 'hegemon' of the Russian Revolution. The work had two aspects. To keep fit and adequate to every new turn of history the theory of Revolutionary Marxism; to define the immediate strategic objectives of the working

class as the vanguard of democratic Russia in her fight against Tsarism ; and to establish reliable tests for the recognition of friend and foe in this fight : such was the ideological task that stood before the leaders of the Russian proletariat. To hammer together a revolutionary party capable of doing its duty as the strategic staff and the shock troops of the Revolution was their task as organizers. In both of these tasks the rôle of Lenin was incommensurable with that of any other single man.

Throughout the long period of underground and unapparent preparatory work, there were ups and downs in the spontaneous revolutionary movement of the Russian people. In 1893 the great wave that broke in 1905 was already beginning to rise. These twelve years were an ascending period when democratic Russia made increasingly rapid strides towards revolutionary consciousness and political maturity. The December rising of the Moscow workmen in 1905 was the crest of the wave, and was followed by a period of descent and reaction, gradual for the first year or so but degenerating by 1907 into an apparently hopeless slump. Towards 1912 there begins a new rise of the wave which, first deviated and then immensely complicated and strengthened by the intervention of war, was to culminate in the cataclysm of 1917.

Within the pre-revolutionary years 1893-1905 we may discern three principal phases : from

1893 to 1898 the task was to make and strengthen the first nuclei of the revolutionary Marxist party and to vindicate its programme against the outworn ideas of the Narodniks ; from 1898 to 1903 it was to save the newly-born revolutionary Social-Democratic Party from the non-political trade-unionist tendencies of the less stable Marxists ; from 1903 onwards to counteract the disorganizing influences within the revolutionary party itself and to combat the looseness of organization and elasticity of political principle favoured by its right wing. This led to the formation, inside the party, of an uncompromising revolutionary group, the Bolsheviks, with whom Lenin becomes henceforward indissolubly linked.

Vladimir Ul'yanov arrived in Petersburg in the early autumn of 1893. That city, which was at once the greatest centre of the democratic intelligentsia, and the largest and most advanced single centre of the working class, was naturally also the principal centre of the Marxist movement. Here were the headquarters of the ' legal Marxists,' bourgeois intellectuals who were attracted by the doctrine of Marx because it seemed to them to give an historical justification to industrial capitalism. Their leader was Peter Struve. By their side there were also groups of ' illegal ' Marxists, which formed the ' Petersburg Fighting Union for the Liberation

of the Working Class.' It included, among others, the brothers Krasin, one of whom, Leonid, was afterwards Soviet Ambassador in London; Krzhizhanovsky, who is to-day President of the State Planning Committee of the U.S.S.R.; and Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya, who became the wife of Lenin. The activities of the group consisted in studying the works of Marx and in initiating chosen workmen in the elements of Marxism.

The arrival of Vladimir Ul'yanov was preceded by rumours of the exceptional extent of his knowledge both of Marxian theory and of hard statistical facts about Russia. When the Petersburg men became better acquainted with him they were impressed not only by his immense and perfectly digested knowledge, but by his unquenchable vital energy and the uncompromising nature of his revolutionary convictions. Introduced into the Petersburg group, he easily became its most prominent member. It was largely due to him that 'agitation'—that is to say, practical everyday propaganda in connection with the immediate needs and conflicts of the workmen's life—began to be substituted for purely theoretical 'propaganda' as the principal task of the Union. In his work with the workmen Ul'yanov displayed a genius for gaining their confidence and putting them at complete ease. His educational relations with them were reciprocal: while he

taught them the elements of Marxism, he diligently learned from them the concrete conditions of their life and work. He very firmly opposed the tendency among some of his comrades to treat the workmen as intellectual inferiors and feed them with a simplified adaptation of Marxian theory, always insisting on giving the more advanced and forward of them a complete theoretical equipment that would place them on a level with the Marxist intellectuals.

The same years 1894-5 saw a great outburst of Marxian literary activity. As the Marxist writers had to comply with the censorship, the language of their books was very professorial, abstract, and even deliberately obscure. Ul'yanov took part in this 'legal' literary activity, but nothing was more alien to his nature than professorial circumlocution. Whatever he wrote the lion's claw was sure to show. When in 1895 a symposium of Marxist articles was planned, in which Struve, Plekhanov, Ul'yanov and others took part, it was on account of Ul'yanov's contribution that the book was seized and destroyed by the censorship.

But his principal literary work was 'illegal,' consisting of pamphlets and leaflets printed on a hectograph and circulated secretly in a necessarily small number of copies. The most remarkable of these early writings was the pamphlet issued in three parts in 1894, *Who*

are the Friends of the People and how they fight against the Social-Democrats. This was really the first statement of genuinely revolutionary Marxism on Russian soil. It contained a masterly analysis of the economic development of Russia, and an implacable exposure of the essentially reactionary character of the Narodnik theory. He pointed out, at the same time, that Marxism was not a dogma to be accepted by an act of faith, but a scientific theory whose only claim to recognition was that it was the one theory that squared with the facts. The pamphlet ended with these prophetic words, which seem to epitomize the whole subsequent history of the Russian working class :

‘It is on the industrial working class that the Social-Democrats centre their attention and their activity. When the advanced members of that class shall have assimilated the ideas of scientific Socialism and the idea of the rôle of the Russian workman in history, when their ideas are widespread and the workmen have created stable organizations that will transform the disconnected economic war of to-day into a conscious class-struggle—then will the Russian *Workman*, rising at the head of all democratic elements, overthrow absolutism and lead the RUSSIAN PROLETARIAT (by the side of the proletariat of ALL COUNTRIES)

along the straight way of open political struggle towards a *Victorious Communist Revolution.*'¹

In the summer of 1895 Ul'yanov found¹ himself able to go abroad. As he was under police surveillance (ever since his expulsion from Kazan University in 1887), he had to receive special permission to do so, and this was given to him only on the occasion of his convalescence from a dangerous illness. He went to Switzerland to get into touch with Plekhanov and the Liberation of Labour group. Plekhanov was strongly impressed by him. He thought him the most remarkable visitor from Russia he had had for all these years, and is said to have described him as a future Russian Robespierre. It was decided that on his return to Petersburg Ul'yanov should set up a secret press, the necessary equipment for which he brought with him from Switzerland on his return journey. Back in Petersburg he at once set to work. The first number of the 'illegal' paper, *The Workmen's Cause* (*Rabocheye Delo*), was ready early in December 1895, when the police, who, of course, had long been on the track of the Fighting Union, arrested almost all its members, seizing at the same time the press with the first number of the *Workmen's Cause* ready for distribution. Only a very few of the members remained at

¹ *Works*, i. p. 210.

large, including N. K. Krupskaya, who was not arrested till about a year later.

Political offenders under the last Tsars were not tried in any court, their fate being decided by the Tsar on the advice of the head of the police. The procedure was invariably very slow and drawn out, and Ul'yanov and his 'accomplices' remained in solitary confinement in the House of Preliminary Detention for more than a year. The régime was very severe, and not all who underwent it were able to survive it. But Ul'yanov's constitution could stand a great deal, and he was capable of that inner discipline which could put to the best use even solitary confinement. The technique of secret relations between each other and with the outer world was highly developed among the political prisoners of that time, and Ul'yanov in his cell was not only kept informed of outside doings but contrived on repeated occasions to send out proclamations and pamphlets of the most revolutionary nature. They had a considerable influence on the course of the great strikes which occurred precisely during his confinement (May 1896). It was also in prison that he did the greater part of his work on *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, which he completed in Siberia, and which came out in 1899. Based on a tremendous amount of statistical material, this epoch-making book disposed for ever of the Narodnik view of the peasantry as a homo-

geneous class by clearly demonstrating the advanced state of its differentiation under the action of capitalistic development.

In January 1897 the fate of Ul'yanov and his comrades was at last decided, the sentence being one of banishment for three years to Eastern Siberia. He was allowed to travel at his own expense and unaccompanied by gendarmes. His place of destination was the village of Shushenskoye in the District of Minusinsk, in the valley of the Upper Yenisei. There he remained for three years till February 1900; he was joined there in 1898 by Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya who had been sentenced to a similar term of banishment a few months after him, and whom he married in the July of that year.

At Shushenskoye Ul'yanov continued to work in his usual regular and disciplined way, completing *The Development of Capitalism*, and writing *The Tasks of the Russian Social-Democrats* (published abroad in 1898), the first outline of the organizational ideas which found their complete expression in *What is to be done*. As always, he profited by an enforced leisure to extend his reading. He also did some translations, translating among other things *The History of Trade Unionism*, by Sidney and Beatrice Webb. In his spare time he played chess, in which he excelled, and went out shooting. It was under articles written at Shushenskoye that there first began to appear the signature of N. Lenin, which was

before long to become his generally accepted name.

The arrest of the Petersburg Fighting Union, followed as it was by numerous similar arrests in other parts of the country, was a very severe blow to the Social-Democratic movement. The surviving groups succeeded in bringing together at Minsk a congress of nine delegates which laid the formal foundations of a united Social Democratic Workmen's Party of Russia. As all the delegates were immediately arrested the practical results of the Congress were nil. But it had time to issue a Manifesto which became an important landmark in the history of Russian Communism. It contains, in particular, a clear statement of what later became the chief point of contention between Lenin and the Mensheviks—the assertion that the Russian bourgeoisie was devoid of revolutionary spirit and that consequently, though the coming Revolution which was to overthrow Tsarism would be a 'bourgeois' revolution and would profit the further growth of Capitalism, the only class that was capable of carrying it out was the Proletariat.

The effect of the Manifesto, however, was by no means immediate. Favoured by the industrial boom of the late Nineties the Russian workmen had been able materially to improve their economic conditions by a succession of victorious strikes. Many Social-Democrats were so elated by these successes of the workmen against the

employers that they began to incline to views closely approximating to those of English Trade Unionism. The workmen's party, they said, must only support the spontaneous efforts of the workmen themselves for better conditions of life, leaving all political action to the parties of the Liberal bourgeoisie. The followers of this policy became known as the 'Economists.' For a few years they practically dominated the Russian Social-Democratic movement, almost depriving it of all revolutionary energy.

But, as the revolutionary wave was rising irresistibly, this eclipse of Social-Democratic activity favoured the rapid success of a new Revolutionary Party, the S.-R.s ('Socialist-Revolutionaries'), who adopted a modified Narodnik programme, substituted for the idea of class the looser conception of 'toiling people,' which included the intelligentsia and the peasants as well as the workmen. The S.-R.s were genuine revolutionaries, but though they called themselves Socialists, they were in reality merely extreme *petit-bourgeois* democrats.

All this was going on while Lenin was in exile. The counter-revolutionary propaganda of the Economists stung him to action as soon as he heard of it. A declaration written by him and signed by seventeen Social-Democrats exiled to the Minusinsk district became the first rallying point for the revolutionary Social-Democrats.

When early in 1900 Lenin's term of exile

expired, and he was allowed to settle at Pskov, which was within easy reach of Petersburg and of the Western frontier, he at once began to concert with the other revolutionary Social-Democrats, who were now returning from Siberia, for common action against the Economists. They succeeded in arranging a conference in Pskov which entrusted Lenin, Martov and Potresov with the task of going abroad, there to establish contact with the Liberation of Labour group and to found a Social-Democratic periodical. So Lenin left Russia, and once abroad became an 'illegal' émigré. A few months later he was joined by his wife, whose term of exile, having begun later, expired later than his.

By the end of 1900 the new periodical, which received the name of *Iskra* (The Spark), began to appear in Munich. When the Bavarian police began to be disagreeable, the *Iskra* was transferred, in June 1902, to London.

Lenin played the principal part in all the practical work, and was entrusted with all relations with Russia. In August 1902 the *Iskra* staff received a new recruit in the person of Leon Trotsky, just escaped from Siberia. He was only twenty-three, but his brilliant literary gifts made him appreciated by his elder comrades, and he soon became a major figure in the Social-Democratic world.

There was much friction inside the editorial

group, between Plekhanov on the one side, and Lenin, Martov and Potresov on the other. Plekhanov's prestige as the founder of Russian Social-Democracy and a Marxist thinker of international reputation stood exceedingly high. But he was difficult to get on with, and his haughty and domineering manner more than once brought the whole enterprise to the verge of dissolution. But the younger editors showed the utmost patience with the 'grand old man' of Russian Marxism, so that, whatever the frictions between the editors, to the outer world the *Iskra* presented a united fighting front. While strongly supporting all genuine enemies of Tsarism, it drew a firm dividing line between the only real nucleus of the Revolutionary movement — revolutionary Social-Democracy — and its more or less unreliable allies. It encouraged even the Liberals, in so far as they were sincere in their opposition to Autocracy, while systematically and pitilessly exposing their cowardly and impotent moderation. It severely criticized the eclectic theories and unprincipled practice of the S.-R.s without refusing to collaborate with them in real revolutionary work. Above all, it conducted a systematic campaign against the opportunist elements inside the Social-Democratic movement.

Lenin took a leading part on every sector of the *Iskra's* fighting front. But the most important of his writings of this period deal

with problems of party organization. The principal of these (which came out as a separate pamphlet in 1902) is the famous *What is to be done?* (*Chto delat'?*) Largely occupied by a polemical discussion with obscure opponents—long politically dead—it may not now seem entertaining reading to one who is not a special student of the controversies between the Russian Social-Democrats. But it is difficult to point out any other work so thoroughly illuminating as this of the mind of the greatest of revolutionary leaders.

The pamphlet is directed against the Economists who interpreted Marxism as implying that the workmen themselves had already, in capitalistic conditions, attained to a clear and full consciousness of their class-ends, and that the intellectuals had nothing else to do but to support them in their economic struggle with the class of the employers, without adding anything to the workmen's demands. By setting up the 'spontaneous' movements of the imperfectly conscious masses into the one law of the labour movement, the theory of the Economists ruled out the constitution of an organized revolutionary party and had for its inevitable consequence the abandonment of all political action to the bourgeois liberals. To describe this theory Lenin coined the word *Khvostizm*—'tailism'—because it condemned the Social-Democrats to lag behind and 'play

the tail' to the working class.¹ With all the force of his common sense he attacked their cant about the proletariat being able to develop an adequate class consciousness without the aid of a superior knowledge that could only be transmitted by individual members of the bourgeois intelligentsia :

'The history of all countries testifies to the fact that by its own efforts the working class can only evolve a trade-unionist consciousness,—that is, the conviction that it is necessary to coalesce into unions in order to fight the employers, to demand of the Government laws in favour of labour, etc. The doctrine of Socialism grew up out of the philosophical, historical, economic theories that were elaborated by educated members of the propertied classes, by the intelligentsia. Marx and Engels, the founders of the scientific Socialism of to-day, belonged themselves to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the same way the Social-Democratic theory grew up in Russia, quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement, as the natural and inevitable development of the ideas of the revolutionary intelligentsia.'²

¹ Plekhanov, whose polemical style was more exuberant than Lenin's, used a stronger metaphor in his anti-Economist articles in the *Iskra*: 'the Economists,' he said, 'can do nothing but contemplate the posterior of the working class.'

² *Works*, v. p. 141.

The duty of a Social-Democratic party was not to follow in the wake of the 'spontaneous' moods of the workmen, but to become the vanguard of the working class, its organizing staff. For this end two things were necessary: a scientific theory of revolution and an efficient organization of revolutionaries. The former had been given to the working class by Marx and Engels. Without the theory evolved by the two great Germans, no working class in the world would have been able to attain to adequate political consciousness. But—and this gives the pamphlet a peculiarly prophetic character—the situation of the Russian Social-Democracy was particularly responsible:

'History has placed before us a task which is more revolutionary than the immediate tasks of the proletariat of any other country. The completion of this task, the destruction of the strongest bulwark of European, and we may even say Asiatic, reaction would make of the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international proletarian revolution. And we have the right to believe that we will earn this title of honour—deserved already by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the Seventies—if we are able to inspire our movement—a thousand times more extensive and profound than theirs—with the same unconditioned audacity and energy.'¹

¹ *Works*, v. p. 138.

But to attain that end it was necessary to organize a really efficient fighting force, and it was to this task that Lenin, from the *Iskra* period onwards, devoted all his energies.

The *Iskra's* and Lenin's work of re-establishing the Social-Democratic party of Russia as an organization of revolutionary Marxists was so far successful that when, in 1903, a second Congress was convened, the Social-Democratic groups in Russia sent an overwhelming majority of delegates supporting the views of the *Iskra*. The Congress met in August at Brussels, but the behaviour of the Belgian police forced it before long to migrate to London, and it was there that it completed its work.

On most things the *Iskra* group was supported by the great majority of the delegates from Russia, but on two points there appeared a rift inside the *Iskra* group itself. The majority, led by Lenin and Plekhanov, insisted, on the one hand, on a statute that would make of the party a disciplined and centralized organization capable of concerted action in its fight against Tsarism; on the other, though it advocated the support of the bourgeois Radicals 'in so far as they were revolutionary or even merely oppositional in the struggle against Tsarism,' it emphasized the entire distinctness of the proletarian movement from that of the bourgeois Left and insisted on the complete independence of Social-Democratic policy from the Liberals. The

minority, with Martov, Potresov, Axelrod and Trotsky as their leaders, preferred a looser party organization which would be wide open to all 'sympathizers,' while, in respect of the Liberals, it advocated a course that tended to make the Social-Democrats the mere prompters of the latter. It is with reference to the number of votes cast for these two sets of views that the partisans of the former came to be called *bol'shevik*, from *bol'shinstvo*—'majority,' and their opponents *men'shevik*, from *men'shinstvo*—'minority.'

Throughout the Congress Plekhanov gave his full support to the views of Lenin, which were in the true tradition of the *Iskra*. His speeches, in fact, were the most striking moments at the Congress, and have become classics of the Communist tradition. Especially significant was his speech on 'democratic principle.' 'The fundamental principle of democracy,' he said, 'is *salus populi—suprema lex*. Translated into the language of revolutionaries this means the success of the Revolution is the supreme law. If for the success of the Revolution we were to find ourselves obliged temporarily to restrict the action of one or other of the democratic principles, it would be a crime to hesitate before such a restriction.'

It was also Plekhanov who defined the attitude of the adversaries of Lenin's 'harsh' statute as an attitude of 'intellectuals saturated with bourgeois individualism,' adding that no

workman would be afraid of discipline. The point was afterwards developed with great force by Lenin in his anti-Menshevik writings of 1904-5. It may seem to stand in contradiction with the rôle ascribed to the intellectuals in *What is to be done?* But the contradiction is only superficial. A few individual intellectuals were necessary for the creation of scientific Socialism, but collectively the intelligentsia is a victim of an individualism incompatible with Socialist organization.

The Congress ended, on the whole, with the complete victory of Plekhanov and Lenin. The elections to the Central Committee (the active organizing centre in Russia) and to the editorial committee of the *Iskra* gave a majority in both bodies to the men of the majority. But the minority refused to submit to the decision of the Congress, and at once started a campaign directed primarily against Lenin as the author of the 'harsh' statute. He was accused of wanting to bully the minority, of 'dictatorial' and 'bureaucratic' tendencies. Under the influence of his old friend Axelrod, Plekhanov began to waver, and then definitely passed over to the seceders. This turned the tables. Many of the majority men abandoned the cause of revolutionary purism, and Lenin found himself almost isolated. The party machine was seized by the Mensheviks, and the Bolsheviks found themselves cast out of the organization in which

they had had a majority. This forced them to organize afresh; and the Social-Democratic Party was henceforward split into two hostile sections. All this happened in the end of 1903 and the early months of 1904, at a time when affairs in Russia were definitely approaching a revolutionary situation. The principal result of the disorganizing action of the Mensheviks and of Plekhanov's weakness was thus that, at a time when it was most needed, the party of the Proletariat was paralysed and out of form.

When Lenin, chiefly by the Mensheviks, is accused of love of power and of dictatorial ambitions, it is very largely on the strength of his attitude during and after the Congress of 1903. Within these last years such an amount of material concerning this episode has been published, and has thrown such a strong light on it that it has become the best-known episode in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement.¹ The effect of this material has been entirely to dispel the Menshevik legend. In the events that followed the Congress the Mensheviks were invariably the attacking side. Even after the 'victory' of the Mensheviks, Lenin acted much less drastically than one would expect from his 'dictatorial' reputation. If there is anything to be found fault with in his behaviour, it is rather that he did not at once sever all connections with the undisci-

¹ See *Leninskie Sborniki*, i.-iv., vi.-viii., x., xi.

plined and imperfectly revolutionary wing of the party and create a new party, as he did in 1917. The situation, however, was such that a complete breach would have remained unintelligible to the rank and file of the Social-Democratic Party in Russia. Party opinion had not yet grasped the importance of the points on which the scission had occurred, and was inclined to regard them as minor technicalities. It was only much later, when it became clear that these technicalities were essential features of a definite type of opportunism, which had little in common with revolutionary Marxism, that the Party began to understand the necessity for separation. This did not occur till 1912.

But, if he did not sever all connection with the Mensheviks, he at once started to work at reconstructing from what remained standing of the revolutionary organization a new organization independent in fact, if not in name, from the usurpers of the minority. By the end of 1904, a new Central Committee ('Bureau of the Committees of the Majority'), pledged to the decisions of the London Congress, had been formed, and Lenin had resumed the publication in Geneva of a Bolshevik periodical, *Vpered* (*Forward*). This was on the very eve of the outbreak of the First Revolution.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST REVOLUTION (1905-7)

THE massacre of the Petersburg workmen on the 'Red Sunday' of 22nd (9th) January 1905, which killed in the Russian proletariat the last remnants of their faith in the Tsar, completed their transformation into a revolutionary class, and thus proved the beginning of the First Russian Revolution, found Lenin in Geneva. He remained there till November, when the first victories of the Revolution made it possible for him to come to Petersburg. From his exile he followed the rapidly developing events with that extraordinary degree of understanding of current history which was now for the first time given full opportunity to exercise itself. The articles written by him in these months give a social analysis and a political diagnosis of every turn in the situation that no historian could improve on. And yet he was all the time primarily concerned with the practical tasks of a revolutionary leader.

The problems on which his attention was

chiefly concentrated were the peasant problem and the problem of victory.

The former resolved itself into the question of how to solve the land question, that is to say, how to dispose of the land owned by the squires.

Of the Russian revolutionary parties the S.-R.s advocated the socialization of the land and its distribution in equal holdings between the peasants. The Social-Democrats at first regarded themselves as a workmen's party not immediately interested in the solution of the land problem, and this attitude was shared at first by Lenin. But, unlike many of his comrades, he was at least always quite clear on two points; that, in the immediate task of overthrowing the squirearchy and its political expression, Tsarism, the peasants were a natural ally of the working class; and that the preservation of the former serf-owners' land-owning meant the perpetuation of social conditions which made possible the survival of autocracy. At first his solution of the land problem was on the face of it exceedingly moderate. It proposed no more than the restitution to the peasants of the land they had held under serfdom and which had been retained by the squires in 1861. In itself this was no revolutionary measure, but it was to be accompanied by the institution of peasant land committees charged with carrying it out, and

this would indeed have revolutionized social relations in the villages.

But in 1905 it became apparent that this was not enough, and that nothing short of the complete abolition of squires' landowning would satisfy the peasants. This made Lenin propose a new land programme, implying the confiscation of all the land of the squires, churches, Imperial family, etc. Such a confiscation was not, however, in his conception, a Socialist measure, as it was in the opinion of the S.-R.s, who regarded the equality of holdings as almost tantamount to the establishment of Socialism. It was merely the necessary condition of a democratic revolution, which would make democracy possible by economically eliminating the one class that was interested in the survival of Tsarism. As for its effect on Capitalism, Lenin insisted that it would only help its growth by abolishing all monopoly of landholding. In its new form Lenin's agrarian programme retained its earlier features : it was emphasized that it was a measure to be carried out in the interest of the peasants as the chief allies of the workmen, but one in which the workmen were not themselves directly interested ; and the peasants were invited to display the maximum of organized revolutionary activity by instituting revolutionary land committees that would carry out the reform without waiting for legislative action. Hence the full support given by Lenin to the spontaneous

action of the peasants in seizing the squire estates in the summer and autumn of 1905. He only insisted that they should abstain from the destruction of the live stock and material which was going to become their property.

In analysing the strategic problem of victory Lenin admitted that this was going to be a democratic-bourgeois, and not in the least a Socialist, Revolution; nevertheless its leader, its 'hegemon,' could only be the industrial proletariat, the only class in the country that was 'revolutionary to the end.' The Liberal bourgeoisie would applaud, in a half-hearted and timorous way, the first successes of the Revolutionary forces, but it placed all its hopes in the defeat of the Revolution at a definite and early stage. The *petite bourgeoisie* of the towns, represented by the plebeian intelligentsia and 'semi-intelligentsia,' was genuinely enough revolutionary in so far as the Monarchy was concerned, but was incapable of revolutionary discipline and of clear political thinking. The peasants, though potentially even more revolutionary, were yet politically unconscious; and had not yet connected the land issue with the political issue of the destruction of Tsarism. Moreover, they remained a seemingly homogeneous class only so long as they remained oppressed and limited in their rights by the squirearchic state; as soon as the goal of the

democratic revolution was attained they would rapidly differentiate into genuine, economically conditioned social classes. Consequently the working class, and its fighting staff, the Social-Democratic Party, were alone responsible for bringing the revolution to a successful end. The workmen's party could enter on 'fighting agreements' with other parties—with the S.-R.s, for instance—in so far as they were genuinely revolutionary and democratic, and still more so with non-party revolutionary organizations, but it must preserve its complete ideological independence and purity of programme. Its tactics must be defined by the phrase: 'march separated, strike together.'

The immediate goal of the Revolution was a complete victory over the forces of Tsarism and of the squirearchy and the establishment of a democratic republic. This could only be achieved by the concerted action of the democratic classes, led by the proletariat and culminating in an armed insurrection.

The watchword of armed insurrection must be taken seriously and must be informed by a firm will for victory. This was one of the points which drew a particularly deep dividing line between Lenin and the Mensheviks, who were above all terribly afraid of victory and of having to take part in the revolutionary government. They maintained that revolutionary action must be only 'from below,' and that to

take part in power before the time was ripe for a Socialist revolution was dangerous Jacobinism. Lenin exposed the reactionary element in this quasi-anarchist talk of the Mensheviks. One should not be afraid of the name of Jacobin. 'A Jacobin, inseparably linked with the organization of a proletariat that has become conscious of its class interests, is precisely the definition of a revolutionary Social-Democrat,' he had said already in 1904.¹

The victory over Tsarism would be followed by a long period of civil strife against the survivals and revivals of the old order. Victory must consequently be followed by the establishment of a temporary revolutionary government, which would act 'from above' and not 'from below' only. 'If the Tsarist Government is really overthrown, it must be replaced by some other government. And such another government may only be a provisional revolutionary government. It can find support only in the revolutionary People, that is to say, in the proletariat and the peasants. It can only be a dictatorship, that is to say, not an organization for "order," but an organization for war. He who undertakes the storming of a fortress cannot refuse to continue the war after he has taken the fortress. There are only two alternatives: either we shall take the fortress with the intention of holding it, or else instead of

¹ *Works*, v. p. 455.

trying to storm it, we must say that we ask for no more than a little place beside the fortress.'¹

In the meantime the events moved on. The revolutionary fermentation of the summer months culminated in the general strike which forced the first capitulation of Tsarism, the Manifesto of 30th (17th) October. The following six weeks, known as the 'days of freedom' (*dni svobody*), were a time when there established itself, as it were, an equilibrium between the contending sides. The Government retained its power, but was largely paralysed in the exercise of it.

The armed forces were, in the great majority, unreliable and unfit to be used by the Government, but (with the exception of some of the seamen) were not actively on the side of the Revolution. In the revolutionary committees and Workmen's Councils (Soviets) that sprang up all over the country, armed insurrection was very far from being a generally adopted watch-word. Mensheviks and non-party elements gravitating towards Menshevism were dominant in most of these bodies. Instead of making an effort to conquer power, they merely tried to 'exert pressure from below' on the Liberal bourgeoisie and on the new 'constitutional' government.

The peasants, though in a state of intense

¹ *Works*, vi. p. 171.

fermentation, were quite unorganized, and had not yet realized that the land issue was indissolubly linked with the issue between Monarchy and Republic.

Most of the revolutionary leaders returned to Russia with the dawn of the 'days of freedom,' but the situation was too precarious and undecided for the party executives to permit them risking their lives and their liberty by openly appearing in public. The figure-heads of the disconnected and spontaneous movements of the revolutionary masses continued to be chance men with no qualification in their past and no political understanding.

Lenin was among the first of the revolutionary émigrés to return to Russia. Though he made several public appearances at mass meetings—each time under strict precautions against being recognized by the police and under assumed names—he was unable to exercise that direct influence which played such a decisive part in 1917. What influence he did exercise was through the Bolshevik party machine or through the press. Owing to the financial and literary support of Maxim Gorky, he had at his disposal a big daily, the *Novaya Zhizn* (*The New Life*), which was strictly pledged to the Bolshevik programme and where he could for the first time in his life write with almost complete freedom for a nation-wide audience.

But the immediate task before Lenin was now

the armed insurrection that would wrest the power from the Tsar. During the preceding summer he had seriously studied military science in its application to street warfare. In Russia, the Bolshevik committees had steadily been preparing for that emergency—the technical organizer of the munition work being Leonid Krasin, afterwards Soviet Ambassador in London. The S.-R.s were likewise preparing for armed action. The fact that the insurrection had thus two organizing staffs had for its result a lack of unity in its strategic direction. Apart from this lack of cohesion between the revolutionary parties, there were many unfavourable circumstances in the way of the insurrection. The organizing influence of the parties did not reach very deep into the masses, and their material equipment was, even after months of preparation, inadequate. But the principal cause militating against success was the political immaturity of the masses. The passage from slavery to freedom had been too sudden, and ‘constitutional illusions’ were still too attractive even for many of the conscious workmen. The insurrection did not begin until the Government had recovered sufficiently to reassert its authority. The Petersburg Soviet was arrested and the Black Sea mutiny squashed before the revolutionary organizations of Moscow were ready to strike out. The insurrection of the Moscow workmen was one of the most heroic

episodes in the revolutionary history of the world. But it remained isolated. The *élan* of the Petersburg workmen was spent, and the railwaymen even failed to prevent by a strike the transfer of troops to Moscow. Still the insurrection was not put down till after ten days' hard fighting and till after reliable units of the Imperial Guards had been brought from Petersburg.

The defeat of the Moscow insurrection was primarily due to mistakes in its tactical conduct. For though the political conditions were unfavourable, its success might have been much greater if a more efficient plan of operations had been followed; and even a temporary victory in Moscow might have done much to change the general situation. The example of the Moscow insurrection has become the classical experience in urban warfare. It was closely studied by Lenin, and made good use of in October 1917. Its principal lesson is, as was at once pointed out by him, that the fundamental rule of revolutionary tactics was to assume the offensive and not to defend the suburbs, but to seize the vital centres of the city. ('Defensive is the death of an insurrection.') The Mensheviks, who had given it very half-hearted and lukewarm support, lamented its having been attempted, and accused the Bolsheviks and Lenin of embarking on adventures. Plekhanov's comment was that 'it was a mistake to have taken up

arms.¹ Lenin's political valuation of the Rising was different. While criticizing its conduct severely, he recognized that it was a defeat worth a victory, for it immensely enriched the experience of the revolutionary proletariat and of its fighting staff, the Bolshevik organization.

Nevertheless, it was a defeat, and the defeat of the Revolution. The winter of 1905-6 was a period of bloody suppression, when many thousands of revolutionaries were massacred, and the revolutionary parties were reduced to an ineffective defensive. Lenin did not at once acknowledge his cause defeated. For another eighteen months after the Moscow defeat he continued to regard the situation as capable of once more becoming revolutionary, and to do all he could to raise the spirit of the revolutionary workmen. It is easy to-day for the historian to see that he was wrong, and that the Moscow defeat was the decisive turning-point. But it is equally certain that the duty of a revolutionary leader was to keep up the spirit of the revolutionaries even after all hope had been lost. 'Revolutionary Social-Democrats,' Lenin said, 'must be the first to adopt the most energetic and direct methods of struggle and the last to turn to more devious ways.'¹ This does not mean, however, that Lenin lost his sense of reality and his power of analysing every given moment of the situation. His mistake, if mis-

¹ *Works*, vii. (2), p. 122.

take it may be called, was that at every given moment he saw a way towards a more promising to-morrow.

The defeat of the Revolution had concentrated the hopes of the masses—of the urban *petit bourgeois* as of the peasants—on the Duma, and their attitude to the Duma became the central point in the policy of the political parties. The Duma had been first promised early in 1905 as a consultative assembly elected under a very unequal and restricted franchise. The unanimous decision of the revolutionary parties had been to boycott such a Duma, and this boycott had been fully justified by the October victory. Though the October Manifesto changed the character of the Duma, it remained entirely unsatisfactory from any democratic point of view, and the revolutionary parties continued to boycott it even after the December Insurrection. The elections, which were held in March, however, showed that the masses did not approve of this policy. The revolutionary parties having nominated no candidates, the towns voted for the Liberal party of the Cadets, who were the most radical party in the field, while the peasants sent non-party representatives who afterwards turned out to be much more radical than the Cadets.

In April 1906, just before the meeting of the Duma, the Social-Democrats held a Fourth Party Congress at Stockholm, in which both

Bolsheviks and Mensheviks took part. The reunion of the two groups was dictated by the whole situation. Large sections of party opinion wished to be Social-Democrats rather than Mensheviks or Bolsheviks. They ascribed the failure of the Revolution to disunion, and were yet unable to see the essential incompatibility of Menshevism with revolutionary action. Reunion was further facilitated by the dominance of left-wing tendencies, due to the horrors of the Government reaction and to the influence of Trotsky among the Mensheviks. Most of them now accepted the principle of armed insurrection. So that, though the Mensheviks were in a majority at Stockholm, the first resolution of the Congress proclaimed it the Party's task 'to seize the power from the Tsarist Government.'

But the heroes of the day were the Liberals—the Cadets. Throughout his career there was no one whom Lenin despised and hated more than he did these 'vermin who take possession of the field of battle when the heroes have been defeated.' His article on the *Victory of the Cadets* (at the primary elections of 1906) is perhaps the most powerful invective in the whole of his works. Consistently, patiently, unswervingly, he exposed to the people the essentially undemocratic nature of these Liberals, their hypocrisy, their readiness to compromise with Tsarism, their snobbish attachment to

parliamentary good form. But in the first Duma, besides the Cadets, there was another strong group—the non-party peasants. Very immature politically, led by chance men, by no means clear as to the necessity of fighting Tsarism to the end, they were, on the whole, a very moderate group of Democrats. But they were sincere in their mistakes, and they were by nature pledged to the idea of getting the land for the peasants. In his articles, written during the period of the first Duma, Lenin did everything to encourage and revolutionize them, and to deepen the lines that divided them from the Cadets. As afterwards in 1917 with the soldier and peasant masses, he knew that there was a profound difference between the ‘moderateness’ of the unconscious and politically immature masses and that of the non-Bolshevik intelligentsia. He knew that there were more revolutionary possibilities in a ‘moderate,’ Monarchist, or patriotic peasant than in the most revolutionary of S.-R. intellectuals. And the events of 1917 and of the Civil War proved how right he was. But the time had not come yet. The Duma, having raised the land question, was dissolved, for the triumphant squire-arctic government had decided to make no concessions in this matter. The dissolution was followed by no serious disturbances, and the new Premier, Stolypin, inaugurated a reign of more drastic and more efficient reaction.

The election held in January 1907 gave an even more radical Duma than the first had been. The Social-Democratic parliamentary party alone numbering sixty-five; it was dominated by the Mensheviks, but in spite of this behaved with considerable revolutionary decency. It was a charge brought against the Duma Social-Democratic Party of organizing revolutionary cells in the Army that proved the pretext for Stolypin to dissolve the Second Duma. Simultaneously with the dissolution, a new electoral law was promulgated, which gave about nine-tenths of the seats to the squires. The *coup d'état* was received by the country in silence. The Revolution was dead.

Ever since the 'days of freedom' Lenin had been living in Russia 'on an illegal status'—that is to say, with a false passport and unknown to the police. With the growth of reaction he moved to Finland, which, having reconquered its autonomy in 1905, was free for the time being from the Russian gendarmes. But when after the July *coup d'état* it became apparent that the revolutionary situation was over, it was decided that he should leave the country. He crossed the frontier in the end of 1907, not to return till April 1917.

CHAPTER V

REACTION AND REAWAKENING
(1907-14)

THERE were in the life of Lenin two particularly gloomy periods: the one following the party schism of 1903; the other, the final defeat of the first Revolution. The two were very different, but both had in them—very different—elements of hope. In 1904 Lenin found his cause abandoned by those whom he had believed its trustiest champions, and the revolutionary army demoralized and disorganized—at a time when the whole country was rapidly approaching the moment of Revolution. The causes of the depression lay entirely in the past, and life was militating against them. But, for the moment, action was crippled by the weight of what had happened. The opportunity was at hand but the force was lacking. In 1907 life itself had turned against his cause. The revolutionary wave was over, reaction was triumphant, the best comrades dead or in prison, all immediate direct action out of the question. But the shock troops of the proletariat had weathered the storm, and Lenin

had round him a trusty group of Bolsheviks, who only waited for the inevitable turn of history to resume their offensive.

But, for the present, ungrateful, uninteresting, not immediately effective work was demanded—to carry on a slow and steady propaganda, carefully to train efficient party staffs, strictly to preserve the integrity of revolutionary theory; thus slowly but steadily gaining the main mass of the working class to the party of revolutionary Marxism.

The Bolsheviks as a whole remained loyal and true to their principles and to the leadership of Lenin, but among the Party intelligentsia tendencies grew up that were highly dangerous to the unity and discipline of the party. They were the outcome of the undisciplined individualism of the intellectuals, and have a place consequently in the succession of secessions which begins with the Menshevik mutiny of 1903 and includes the Trotskyist revolt of 1924-27. The present schism was not, however, as dangerous as either of these, and was ultimately painlessly overcome. Its leaders were the philosopher Bogdanov and the young Lunacharsky, the literary man of the party. They called themselves the 'left' wing of Bolshevism. Lenin, they said, had 'gone right,'—this was clear from his advocacy of parliamentary methods and his conciliatory attitude towards the *petit bourgeois* democrats—for had

he not admitted electoral coalitions with all honestly republican parties? They demanded the resignation of the Social-Democrats of the Duma and the resumption of the policy of boycott. To emphasize their loyalty to the old Bolshevik tradition they called their periodical *Vpered*, the name of Lenin's paper in 1904-5. But by the side of this uncompromising 'radicalism' the *Vpered* group advocated a revision of Marxism and the rejection of Marx's dialectical materialism. Instead, they advanced the semi-idealistic, Kantian, 'scientific' epistemology of Mach and Avenarius, which denied the scibility of the outer world and reduced reality to sensation. The theories of these 'empiriocritics' found much favour among the Bolshevik intelligentsia, especially outside Russia. They were upheld by Gorky, with whose help they founded a school for propagandists at Capri (afterwards transferred to Bologna) where the new doctrines were instilled into the heads of workmen delegated there by the local Bolshevik committees in Russia.

Lenin threw himself heart and soul into a fight against the new teachings. It was easy for him to expose the specious 'left' arguments of the *Vpered* people, by exposing their complete unreality and irrelevance to current conditions. But what touched him much deeper was the philosophical side of the movement. Dialectical materialism—the synthesis of Hegel's dialectics

with the old scientific materialism—had always been the firm foundation-rock of scientific Socialism. Plekhanov (who entered the lists against Bogdanov by the side of Lenin) had deeply inculcated it in the minds of the Russian Social-Democrats. To Lenin it had become his intellectual lifeblood as early as the Nineties. Before the *Vpered* schism he had, however, given relatively little thought to these fundamentals. In party circles he was regarded as a practical revolutionary, uninterested in philosophy and at sea in philosophical problems. Bogdanov and Lunacharsky in their propaganda laid much stress on his 'philosophical ignorance.' This was entirely false; Lenin's was a naturally philosophical mind; and his philosophical reading, though not very extensive, was always systematic and unusually efficient. His materialism, however, was primarily the natural, inborn materialism of common sense, which sees the world as it is and refuses to reject its existence and to admit the existence of another world without good proof. The *onus probandi*, for the materialist, naturally lies on those who advance theories of reality that are contrary to immediate perception and immediate intelligence. But they have never advanced anything in favour of their views except either hair-splitting and sterile sophistry or irrational faith. As a Socialist and an historian, Lenin knew the close connection between philosophi-

cal idealism and religious faith, and knew from history that the latter had been, and was especially to-day, a force of conservatism which, by attracting men to another world, distracted them from the task of changing the real one according to their needs. Besides founding a school (at Longjumeau, near Paris) to counteract the influence of Capri and Bologna, he wrote a book on *Materialism and Empirio-criticism*. Of all his writings this has probably received least recognition from non-Leninists, but nevertheless it is one of the most essential links in his life-work. The book is inevitably calculated to irritate to the utmost those people who pique themselves on having a philosophical education, for its main feature is that it flatly refuses to 'play the game.' It pitilessly exposes the pretentious unreality of the problems raised by idealistic and 'critical' philosophy and the philistine conventions of the shop philosopher. Its refreshing and iconoclastic common sense reminds one of the no less refreshing ways in which Tolstoy treated the shop conventions of literary criticism and æsthetics in *What is Art?* But Lenin was not the paradoxical *enfant terrible* Tolstoy never ceased to be. While exposing the second-rateness and cheapness of the 'scientific' philosophers of a decadent bourgeoisie, he ungrudgingly recognized the high literary and logical qualities of such classics of philosophy as Berkeley—even when he was

most relentlessly laying bare the sophistry of Berkeley's first premises.

Materialism and Empirio-criticism is not, however, to be reduced to the vindication of sensible materialism against pseudo-scientific sophistries. Its permanent value lies in the way it cleared up the logical muddle on which such theories as Mach's were founded. Lenin showed that only by starting from an antiquated, mechanistic conception of materialism could one regard the 'dissolution of matter' effected by modern physics as affecting the philosophical doctrine of materialism. On the contrary, for a *dialectical* materialist the new physical conceptions tending to identify movement and matter were even more acceptable than the mechanistic views of the eighteenth-century physicists.

By the side of these theoretical aberrations the 'revision' of materialism was big with the more practical danger of developing into a religious faith, for the germ of religion is always inherent in idealism and in everything that approaches it. This did actually happen with Lunacharsky, who evolved the theory of 'God-building' (*bogostroitel'stvo*), according to which it was incumbent on mankind to *build* itself a God according to its ideals. The theory was accepted, among other intellectuals, by Gorky, and has left a permanent trace in literature in his novel *A Confession*. But in the long run it proved just an intelligentsia fad with no real roots in intellectual reality.

The darkest period of the post-revolutionary political depression lasted from 1907 to 1911. 1912 was the year of a great reawakening of the proletariat. This new revival was very different from that which preceded 1905, for now the revolutionary working class found itself practically alone and isolated from other social groups.

A decisive landmark in the revival of the workmen's movement was the massacre by the police of the miners of the Lena Goldfields Company at Bodaibo in East Siberia on 4th April 1912. If the Red Sunday of 1905 was the signal for the revolutionary awakening of all classes, the Lena Massacre was the reveille of the first purely proletarian and Socialist movement in Russia, and thus in a sense the birthday of Russian Communism. It is for this reason that these two dates are officially commemorated to-day by the Soviet Republics.

A characteristic form of the reawakening was the creation of a workmen's daily press in Petersburg. Eighteen days after the Lena Massacre there came out in Petersburg the first number of the *Pravda* (*Truth*). Repeatedly suppressed by the police, it was every time revived under a different name until finally suppressed at the beginning of the War. The *Pravda* (and its successors) were strictly Bolshevik organs, and Lenin, though he lived in Paris or (from the end of 1912) in Galicia, near Cracow, daily contributed the leading article.

Already before these developments the Bolsheviks had severed their connection with the Mensheviks. The decision was taken at the conference of Prague (January 1912), which finally made of the Bolsheviks an autonomous political party, connected in nothing but the mere name of Social-Democrat with the Mensheviks. Emancipated at last from a baleful dependence on the opportunists, Lenin's party met with the support of the great majority of the working class. At the elections of 1912 all the six members returned under the law of 1907 by the workmen's constituencies were Bolsheviks. The Bolshevik group in the Duma thus included *all* the workmen's representatives and *none* but the workmen's representatives. This was a great triumph for Lenin. The years 1912-14 were of immense importance in the history of the contact of Lenin with the Russian proletariat. It was now that he became its effective and recognized, if still secret, leader. Its two mouthpieces, the *Pravda* and the Parliamentary Bolshevik Party, were directed by him. And he stood at the head of a truly homogeneous, 'monolithic,' Central Committee. Once more he saw his goal within practical reach. The 'hegemon' of the Revolution was marching forward towards it, class-conscious, and in spite of the hostility or indifference of all other classes.

The history of the Bolshevik Parliamentary Party is darkened by a curious and painful

episode. Its leader was Roman Malinowski, a Pole, returned to the Duma by the workmen of the Province of Moscow. He was a gifted orator and in all respects a promising comrade. Lenin liked him and had him elected a member of the Central Committee. When Lenin settled in Western Galicia to be within easy reach of the Russian frontier, Malinowski frequently visited him, acting as the depository of Lenin's directions. Now this Malinowski was an *agent provocateur* very cunningly introduced into the party by the Police Department. Rumours to this effect began to circulate in 1913, but Lenin firmly took the side of Malinowski, publicly undertaking his defence. After the outbreak of the War suspicion grew so great that Malinowski resigned and disappeared. But it was only after the Revolution and the opening of the Police archives that documentary evidence was produced of his treachery. It is significant, however, and shows the essential healthiness of the Bolshevik movement that, while a similar discovery that they had an *agent provocateur* in their Central Committee threw the S.-R.s into a demoralized prostration for several years, the activity of Malinowski left no deeper traces than the immediate harm done by his individual treacheries.

CHAPTER VI
THE GREAT WAR
(1914-17)

BEFORE the outbreak of the Great War Lenin was almost entirely absorbed in work for the Russian Revolution. His interest in the international Socialist movement was keen, but the general atmosphere of European Socialism in the period of the Second International was so little suggestive of any immediate possibility of a Socialist revolution that it could not distract the revolutionary Lenin from his absorption in Russian affairs. His attitude towards the European Socialists, especially towards the German Social-Democrats, was one of national modesty. He knew that Russian Socialists had a preliminary task to complete before they could become quite the equals of their Western comrades. This did not prevent him from objecting to any undue interference on the part of foreign Socialists in the home affairs of the Russian Party. While the Mensheviks were always ready to court the intervention of German Social-Democrats in their disputes with the Bolsheviks, Lenin politely but very firmly

declined an offer of mediation made (in 1904) by so great an international authority as Bebel. On the other hand, as early as in *What is to be done?* Lenin was fully conscious of the eventual international importance of Russian Socialism in case of a successful anti-Tsarist revolution, which might become a detonator for Socialist revolution in Europe. Twentieth-century Russia, he thought, might be destined to play a rôle similar to that played by France between 1789 and 1871.

His part in international Socialist affairs was, however, important even before 1914. He attended the congresses of Stuttgart (1907), Copenhagen (1910), and Basel (1912), and from 1907 onwards he was one of the representatives of Russia on the International Socialist Bureau. At Stuttgart he and Rosa Luxemburg (who was a member of the Polish, and thus indirectly of the Russian, Party) drafted the radical text of a resolution on War, worded in the true tradition of Marx and Engels, and containing the essence of what later became the Leninist position. It proclaimed it to be the duty of all Socialist parties in case of war to do all that was in their power to transform war between nations into a civil war between classes. This could not be explicitly opposed by men professing to be followers of Marx, but the German delegation insisted on a vaguer text, alleging the danger of being prosecuted for high treason if a too drastic wording were adopted. The

principle was afterwards reinforced in a more detailed formula at the Basel Congress of 1912.

On the eve of the War the workmen of Petersburg were at a moment of great revolutionary fermentation. Hundreds of thousands were on strike and barricades were being built in the suburbs. The events seemed particularly gratifying because they coincided with the visit to Petersburg of Poincaré, the principal partisan of Tsarism in the period before the coming war. But the events that followed showed only too clearly how ineffective against the immense machine of government the working class was, when once the State had decided on war. The workmen proved no obstacle to the conflagration of Chauvinism that caught Russia in the fatal days of July and August 1914.

The reaction of the Russian Socialist parties to the war presented the same main varieties as that of the Socialists of other countries. Only that the peculiar political conditions led to a different distribution of forces between the three main attitudes. The practical impossibility for a Russian democrat to regard as in any sense national a war conducted by the Tsarist Government, reduced to a very small number the extreme right wing of 'social-patriots,' and even these were in many cases French rather than Russian patriots. The attitude of the great bulk of the Russian Socialists was similar

to that of the I.L.P. and of the Minority Social-Democrats in Germany. It was a pacifist attitude, opposed to active Chauvinism but equally opposed to the idea of profiting by the war for advancing the cause of Social Revolution.

The third, left-wing attitude, which remained loyal to international Socialism and to the Stuttgart and Basel resolutions, was in the beginning practically non-existent in England and France. In Germany it was supported by Karl Liebknecht alone of the whole party. But in Russia it became vocal and active from the outset. Formulated by Lenin, and adopted by the Bolsheviks, it made of Russian Revolutionary Socialism a force of international significance.

The war placed facts before Lenin that he had not been prepared to predict. He knew too well the stuff the leaders of the German Party were made of ever to have believed in their making an effective attempt to interfere with the declaration of war. But he had hoped that they would at least save their faces and make a decent gesture of protest. When the news came that the Party had voted as one man (with the single exception of Karl Liebknecht) for the war credits, he at first thought it was a particularly disgraceful bit of warring on the part of the German Government. To realize that this was not so, and that the

model party of the International had indeed infamously betrayed the most sacred tradition of Socialism, was the severest moral blow for him, and the greatest disillusionment. He saw with bitterness that 'in the days of war-time hysteria, to be a Socialist meant to be in a minority of one.' But he drew his conclusions at once and unhesitatingly: the Second International was dead, and it was the duty of the few Socialists who, like himself, remained Socialists, to set to work at once to build a Third and better one.

The war found Lenin in Galicia, where he was arrested and imprisoned by the Austrian authorities. They were soon, however, told by the Socialist leader, Victor Adler, that Lenin was exceedingly unlikely to support Tsarism in its war with the Central Powers. So he was released, and permitted to leave the country. No sooner was he on the territory of Switzerland—which was then still a free country—than he submitted his *Theses on the War* to a meeting of émigré Bolsheviki at Berne (6th–7th September).¹

The war, Lenin said, was an imperialist war, conducted in the interests of finance capitalists. There was no difference in this respect between the belligerents. The victory of any one of them was against the interests of the working

¹ They were subsequently published in the Bolshevik paper, *The Social-Democrat*, on 1st November; *Works*, xiii., pp. 5–12.

masses. The first duty of the true Socialists of every country was to work for the defeat of 'their own' imperialists. The Russian Social-Democrats in particular must regard the defeat of Tsarism as the least evil for the working classes. The vague wording of the Stuttgart Resolution was transformed into the more explicit and unambiguous formula—'the transformation of the war into a civil war is the one good watchword for the proletariat.' The inglorious death of the Second International must be regarded as final and irreversible. All connection with the traitors of Socialism, whether their name was Plekhanov, Scheidemann, Guesde or Hyndman, must be severed; and steps must at once be taken towards the creation of a new and truly revolutionary International that would not belie its name.

The Bolshevik Central Committee and the parliamentary party in Russia approved the *Theses*, and at once set to work accordingly. The Duma party displayed much energy in using their privileged position for the propaganda of Lenin's ideas. But before long its five members were arrested, tried and sentenced to penal servitude, with deportation to Siberia. The effect of the trial was considerable, and Lenin wrote of it proposing the conduct of the Russian Bolshevik deputies as an example to all good Socialists. Though beheaded, the Russian working class remained in the main true to

the traditions of the *Pravda* and to the leadership of Lenin. When, in 1915, the Russian workmen were invited to send delegates to the 'Industrial War Committee' (through the medium of which the industrial bourgeoisie was to help the government's munition work), the workmen of Petrograd refused to take part in the elections. The delegates that were elected represented only a small minority of Menshevik 'social-patriots.'

War-time conditions made practically impossible all Bolshevik activity in Russia after the trial of the parliamentary Party. With very few exceptions, all the Bolshevik leaders were in Siberia, or abroad; so that when towards the end of 1916 a revolutionary situation became a fact, it developed quite independently of all Bolshevik leadership, only the rank and file of Bolshevik workmen playing their part in it. Lenin was thus practically severed from what had been his life-work—the Russian Revolution—and forced to concentrate entirely on international problems. He foresaw, of course, the approach of the Revolution, and was fully prepared for the event. He was quite clear, too, as to its relevance to his attitude towards the War. A revolution that would merely overthrow Tsarism could not in the least affect his watchword of defeat for 'one's own' imperialists. Even if she became a republic Russia, so long as she was the ally of

imperialist powers, would still be leading an imperialist war, and the Bolshevik attitude would remain unchanged.

It must, however, be made quite clear that Lenin's attitude was entirely distinct from vulgar defeatism. The latter had never been unknown to Russian opposition groups. During the Crimean War even very moderate quasi-liberals had adopted it; during the Japanese, the Liberals and all who stood left of them were more or less on the side of Japan. During the present War, too, hatred of Tsarism, as well as the close connection of many Russian Socialists with the German Party, made pro-Germanism a rather general attitude at one time. Lenin's attitude was not pro-German. The German party for him were the worst of traitors, the type of the *Sozialverräter*. The only political men he liked in Germany were Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who were as ardent defeatists in Germany as he was in Russia. What Lenin wanted was the defeat of all the Imperialist Governments by their own peoples.

To the pacifist attitude Lenin was, from the outset, definitely hostile. Peace between the Capitalist powers could only mean the recovery and perpetuation of that same Imperialism that had made the War inevitable. Real peace, the peace of peoples, could only be the gift of a Proletarian Revolution. What was wanted was not a Capitalist peace in place of a Capitalist

war, but a Civil war between classes instead of the Imperialist war between nations.

As always, Lenin's practical propaganda for the organization of a new International went hand in hand with the theoretical study of the situation. His war-time writings are largely devoted to the analysis of the present age of Imperialism or Finance Capitalism, with its trend towards monopoly, as distinguished from the preceding period of Industrial Capitalism, based on free competition.

In his analysis he points out that one of the essential differences between the age of Imperialism and the earlier ages of Capitalism is the fundamental difference between their wars. The wars of the earlier period could be progressive, in so far as they contributed to the victory of the bourgeoisie over the old forces of feudalism, and achieve the unity of nations. That was why Marx and Engels were able to take sides in the wars of their times. But the present war was a war between Imperialist robbers who were merely quarrelling over their share of the world. There could be no question of right or wrong between them. This did not, however, mean that a just and progressive war had become an entire impossibility. All wars waged against Imperialism by non-Imperialist peoples were just. A war in which a State where Socialism had triumphed would defend itself against attacking Imperialists would

be just ; so would be a war of a colonial or semi-colonial nation, such as China or Turkey, against the encroachment of a Great Power. Even in Europe just wars were still possible, only they would in most cases necessarily take the form of rebellions. Such would be a war of Ireland against England, or of Finland against Russia.

It was in this context that the conception grew up of an alliance between the Proletariat of the advanced Capitalist countries with all the colonial and oppressed peoples, an alliance that corresponded in the international scale to the fighting alliance of the proletariat with the peasants at home. Recognizing, on the one hand, the immense force derived by Imperialism from the exploitation of the peoples of the colonies and of the weaker nationalities ; and, on the other hand, the harm done to the cause of Socialism in oppressed countries by the specious national unity of the exploiters and exploited resulting out of foreign oppression, Lenin included in his programme the self-determination of nationalities, as well as the liberation of the colonies.

Perhaps the most remarkable expression of Lenin's views on the mutual relation of national and social revolution and on the identity of the interests of the proletariat, in the first stages of the world Revolution, with those of the oppressed nations in general, is to be found in the tenth chapter of his pamphlet on *The Results*

of the *Discussion on Self-determination* (1916). It is devoted to the Easter Week rebellion in Ireland, which the Polish Internationalist Radek had called a 'Putsch.' 'To think that a social revolution is *thinkable* without the insurrection of small nationalities in the Colonies and in Europe; without revolutionary explosions of sections of the *petite bourgeoisie* with all their prejudices; without the movement of unconscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses against the oppression of squires, churches, monarchies, foreign nations—to think like that means to abjure Social Revolution. We are invited to imagine one army lining up in one place and saying, "We are for Socialism," and another army doing the same in another place and saying, "We are for Imperialism," and that that will be the Social Revolution. Only from such a ridiculously pedantic point of view was it possible to insult the Irish rebellion by the name of *putsch*.

'He who expects a "pure" Social Revolution will *never* live to see it. He is a revolutionary in words only, incapable of understanding an actual revolution.'¹

The first step towards the organization of a new International was made in 1915 when, on the initiative of the Italian Socialist Party, a conference of left-wing Socialists was assembled at Zimmerwald, near Berne. The majority of the

¹ *Works*, xiii., p. 431.

Conference (including most of the Russian delegates) belonged to the pacifist school of Socialism. Lenin and those who shared his views formed a small but determined minority. The Conference adopted a resolution which reproduced in a watered-down form some of the ideas of Lenin, but said nothing of the necessity of breaking with the 'Social-Chauvinists.' After the conference the left wing elected a bureau for the propaganda of its views, consisting of Lenin, Zinoviev and Radek. The ideas of Lenin made steady headway and, at the second Zimmerwald Conference, held at Kienthal, the 'left' had already a stronger representation.

The Kienthal Conference dissolved on 30th April 1916, and on 1st May, in Berlin, Liebknecht pronounced his famous internationalist speech and founded the *Spartakusbund*. He was arrested the same day. Internationalism had still to wait. It was only the Russian Revolution of March 1917 that changed the situation.

CHAPTER VII
MARCH-SEPTEMBER
1917

THE Revolution of March (February) 1917 was made by the workmen and soldiers of Petersburg. Immediately on the collapse of the Tsarist authorities, and following the tradition of 1905, they instituted a Soviet of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates. The bourgeois politicians, when they saw that the Revolution was victorious, tried to bamboozle the people and its leaders into accepting their leadership and their policy. This task was immensely simplified by the fact that at the head of the Soviet stood Mensheviks, whose dogma it had always been that a bourgeois revolution—as this one obviously was—necessarily implied the transfer of power to the bourgeoisie and the formation of a provisional government from the bourgeois parties. The functions of the Soviet, in strict accordance with Menshevik dogma, were to be limited to exercising on the Government 'pressure from below.' The result was a system of dyarchy during which a Cabinet of bourgeois Imperialists, notoriously hostile to the demands

of the masses, was in possession of the whole apparatus of government, but deprived of real power in the country by the effective supervision of the Soviets. The Foreign Office alone, which had no relation to the administration of the country, was effectively controlled by the most stubborn and obstinate of the Imperialists, Milyukov. Thence they could carry on their policy of 'loyalty to the Allies' without paying the slightest attention to the wishes of the 'revolutionary democracy.'

Inside this latter there were two essentially different elements: the leaders and the masses. The Petersburg Soviet (whose authority was recognized in the whole country) was controlled by a small group directed by the Mensheviks Tseretelli and Dan. They adhered to the platform of the 'Zimmerwald Right' and advocated a 'democratic peace without annexations or indemnities.' They insisted on the Government's making a declaration to the Allies and on calling an inter-allied conference that would openly proclaim what were the 'aims of the war.' In the meantime, they called on the soldiers to 'defend the Revolution' from the Germans. But they also encouraged the revolutionary organization of the masses, and in particular the institution of elected committees in the army, which carried the system of dyarchy into the smallest units.

Only the Bolshevik nucleus of the working

class, had a clear political consciousness and knew more or less what it wanted. The bulk of the enormously over-swollen army was politically quite immature. It knew that it wanted peace, and guessed that this was not so simple to have as to wish. It sincerely believed in the wisdom of the Soviet leaders, and readily adopted the idea of defending the Revolution from the Germans pending the conclusion of a general 'democratic peace,' to which the Allies would surely agree, and for which the revolutionary Government was no doubt working.

Lenin, as soon as he heard of the Revolution, naturally became impatient to go to Russia. But he was on the black list of the Allies' Intelligence Service, and the British authorities refused to let him through. On the demand of the Soviets, the Russian Foreign Office requested a free passage for all Russian émigrés, at the same time letting the Allies understand that it would be only too glad if all internationalists were prevented from coming. Lenin foresaw these developments, and from the outset began to make plans for returning to Russia by a different route. At one time he was quite seriously considering the somewhat fantastic one of going via Germany with a Swedish passport and, as he did not know a word of Swedish, pretending to be dumb. Before long

it became clear that there was no way of returning except through Germany and with the agreement of the German authorities. The Swiss Left-wing Socialist Platten carried the business to a conclusion, and it was agreed that Russian political émigrés, without regard to their views on the war, should be allowed to pass through Germany in a special railway carriage, provided they remained in the carriage during the journey, and had no relation with the outside world except through the intermediary of Platten, who was to accompany them. It was clear from the beginning that this course would give excellent material for propaganda against the internationalists who adopted it. And so it did. In the campaign of lies that was volleyed at Lenin in the course of 1917, the 'sealed carriage' in which he travelled through Germany played the principal part. But Lenin thought it better to become the victim of slander than to remain outside Russia when the fate of her Revolution was being decided. That he really had no other course open to him became perfectly clear a few weeks later. At first only Bolsheviks had agreed to go through Germany, the other Socialists deciding to abide the pleasure of the British authorities. But when, after a month's waiting, the British still flatly refused to let through men belonging even to the right wing of the Zimmerwald Conference, the Menshevik

leader, Martov, saw that the only way left for him was to imitate the Bolsheviks and go through Germany. That the German Staff was serving ends of its own when it let Russian internationalists and pacifists return to Russia via Germany is obvious. But Lenin had his own views of the coming course of events, and we know to-day that he saw farther than Ludendorff.

From Switzerland, and even from Sweden, it was difficult to form a complete opinion of what revolutionary Petrograd really was. The outward, international face of the Revolutionary Government looked very militant and pro-Ally. The heads of the Soviet were notoriously opposed to Lenin's war theses, and even the home Bolsheviks had not yet made any declaration confirming their attitude to war and civil war *after* the fall of Tsarism. So Lenin and Zinoviev (who accompanied him) had grave reasons to apprehend immediate arrest and imprisonment. The Bolshevik leaders who met them at the Russo-Finnish frontier gave them an inkling of the actual situation, but it was not till the train arrived at the station in Petrograd, and Lenin saw the platform lined by rows of soldiers presenting arms and swept by dozens of red banners, that he actually saw what the revolutionary masses were like, and realized the extent of freedom conquered by the Revolution. But the magnificent welcome given to him as

the leader of one of the three great revolutionary parties did not mean a similar welcome to his war theses. It was generally known that he occupied an extreme internationalist position, but no one knew yet what form his views had taken since Tsarist Russia had been transformed into 'the freest Democracy in the world.'¹ The home Bolsheviks had adopted an attitude which was of course internationalist, but was not explicitly defeatist or hostile to the Government; they were only a shade more radical than the left-wing Mensheviks. Kamenev, the Chairman of the Central Committee, and even, for a brief moment, Stalin, on their return from Siberia, held semi-defensist views. Only Sverdlov, without actually knowing of Lenin's theses, had arrived at the same conclusions. But on his way from Siberia Sverdlov had stopped in the Urals, the old field of his revolutionary activity, to organize Bolshevik work among the miners, and did not arrive in Petrograd till the end of April. So even the Bolshevik leaders of Petrograd were not prepared for Lenin's programme. As for the other Socialists and the man in the street, it came as a bombshell to them.

The theses were read to the Bolshevik leaders on the night of Lenin's arrival, and on the next

¹ As has been pointed out in the preceding chapter, Lenin had quite clearly stated his attitude in case of such an event. But he had stated it *en passant*, and few people had noticed it.

day to a united meeting of all Social-Democrats. They were then published in the *Pravda*.

This was their substance.¹ The Russian Revolution had not deprived the war of its Imperialistic character. The slogan of 'defence of the Revolution from the Germans' ('revolutionary défensisme') was false, and no concessions should be made to it. Before the war could become a revolutionary war, the power must pass into the hands of the proletariat and of the poorest peasants, and a complete rupture must be made with the Allied capitalists. But as the 'revolutionary defensism' of the masses was obviously sincere and due to their political naïveté, it was the duty of the internationalists patiently to explain that 'a democratic peace was impossible without the overthrow of Capital.' This propaganda must be carried into the army, and fraternization must be encouraged with the enemy's soldiers. As Russia was at present the freest country in the world, the immediate task of transferring the power to the proletariat and poorest peasants could be accomplished without bloodshed. No support must be given to the Provisional Government. It was absurd to demand, as the Soviet leaders did, 'that this government, a government of Capitalists, should cease to be Imperialist.' It was necessary to explain to the masses that the present Soviet majority was petit-bourgeois

¹ *Works*, xvi. (1), pp. 17-19.

and served the ends of the bourgeoisie. But the Soviets must be regarded as the nucleus of the future revolutionary order, which could not be a Parliamentary Republic ('that would be a step backwards' from the present dyarchy), but only a *Republic of Soviets of Workmen's, Labourers' and Peasants' Delegates*. Immediate tasks were the confiscation of all squires' land in favour of the peasants, and the amalgamation of banks into a single national bank placed under Soviet control. 'Not the introduction of Socialism as an immediate goal, but only the control of the Soviets over the national production and distribution of produce.' The name of the Social-Democratic (Bolshevik) Party must be changed to 'Communist,' to emphasize its demand for a 'Commune-State'—that is, of 'a State whose first archetype was the Paris Commune.' Finally, the Party must take in hand the reconstruction of the International on a strictly Internationalist basis.

The bombshell effect of this programme was due to the Russian politicians—including the Bolshevik leaders—living in a fools' paradise, where they could hide their heads from realities. The fresh voice of a man from abroad, who was, however, in much more real touch with the yet unexpressed realities of popular sentiment, was like the intrusion of an uninvited guest at a good-mannered party. It was a public scandal. The masses had made the Revolution in the

name of peace. But their will had been lulled to sleep by the fine words of the Soviet leaders. Lenin's theses gave expression to what they felt, but felt dimly and unconsciously. They were not prepared to hear their feelings formulated in that clear and uncompromising way. They still believed in 'democratic peace' imposed on the world by the Petersburg Soviet and their loyal ministers, Milyukov and Guchkov.

Of the Bolshevik leaders, some (including Stalin) adhered to Lenin's programme at once. But Kamenev opposed them, placing himself at the head of a group of anti-Leninist 'old Bolsheviks.' For many days Anastasia Kollontay was the only orator who dared take up the defence of Lenin's theses in public, for which she was cruelly ridiculed by all the non-Bolshevik Press. But Lenin continued to hammer them into the party and the masses, speaking daily from the balcony of the Kshesinsky House (where Party Headquarters were) and writing in the *Pravda*. It was only when, at the end of April, a party conference of the Bolsheviks met in Moscow that the opposition was brought over to Lenin's views, and his theses became the official platform of the Party.

With the masses the success of Lenin's propaganda was rapid, though at first unapparent. It was given a tremendous and unasked-for fillip by the obtuseness of the Government. On 2nd May (19th April) Milyukov issued a

message to the Allies, in which he assured them in the name of the Government that the Russian people stood firm on the ground of 'loyalty to the Allies' and of the existing agreements concerning the eventual annexations of enemy territory to be made in the case of victory. The message provoked indescribable indignation among the Petrograd garrison. Spontaneously, without any Bolshevik instigation, regiment after regiment left their barracks and paraded the streets demanding the resignation of the counter-revolutionary Milyukov. The Bolsheviks were quite unprepared for this outburst, and it did not go any farther than unarmed demonstrations, though on the second day the slogans on the posters and banners were of a definitely Bolshevik character. Even the Soviet leaders were profoundly incensed by the brazenness of the Imperialists. The outcome of the whole business was the resignation of the two most odious ministers, Milyukov and Guchkov, and the introduction of five Socialists (including Tseretelli) into the Government. But this made no change in the international situation, for Kerensky, the virtual head of the new Government, was as loyally inclined to the Allies as Milyukov.

During the two months that this 'first coalition' survived, the bourgeoisie and the right-wing Socialist parties were welded, thanks to the exertions of Kerensky and Tseretelli,

into one war party, with 'Loyalty to the Allies' and 'Defence of the Revolution' as its slogans, and worked steadily for the preparation of a new offensive against the Germans. The masses did not at once lose faith in the honest efforts of their leaders to make a 'democratic peace,' but they lost it by degrees, and in that measure they went over to the Bolsheviks. Henceforward, however, inside the great and heterogeneous mass of people that inclined to Bolshevism, we must distinguish between two dissimilar groups. On the one hand, there were the conscious workmen and a relatively small section of the forces, including the Baltic Fleet and the Lettish regiments. These were consciously pledged to Lenin's platform, ready to fight the Government and, if the event demanded, to fight the Germans too (as the Baltic seamen were to prove in September at the Moonsund positions, and the Letts at Riga). On the other hand, there were the unconscious masses of soldiers, who cared very little for land and hardly at all for liberty, but were thoroughly sick of war. This 'trench Bolshevism' was, of course, a dangerous weapon. But Lenin did not hesitate to wield it, because he knew what the demands of the masses of the nation were, and that only that Government would carry them through which would give the country peace.

But Lenin never laid all his hopes on the despairing masses. His main task was to

organize a resistant nucleus for this amorphous democracy in the form of the powerful Bolshevik Party. It was essentially the policy of *What is to be done?* and of 1905, only in new conditions and consequently in a new concrete form. In 1905 Lenin had not thought that the Russian Revolution could have grown into a Socialist Revolution, though he admitted the possibility of its proving a detonator for such a Revolution in Europe. But the enormous development of Imperialism and the events of the war had made him realize that a Proletarian Revolution was not only an immediate possibility but an immediate necessity, if Europe was to be saved from the ruin to which the new Capitalism was leading her. More than ever it became apparent to him that the new phase of Capitalism was anti-democratic, that, unless followed by a Revolution, the war that was to 'make the world safe for Democracy' was in reality the burial of Democracy, and that consequently a democratic Revolution would give no help to the working class in so far as Democracy remained controlled by Capitalism. In the present phase of Capitalist development the programme of 'complete Democracy,'—that is to say, Democracy after the model of the Paris Commune—could not but imply such anti-Capitalist measures as would lead to violent opposition on the part of the bourgeoisie. The Democracy he advocated would be forced to

be an armed and militant Democracy, a Democracy which at the same time would be a dictatorship—a dictatorship founded on Soviet Democracy and exercised in the interests of the workmen and of the poorer peasants. The confiscation of the squires' land, which in 1905 had been conceived of as a purely democratic measure directed against feudal privilege, was now realized to be a serious attack on the Capitalist system, gravely hitting as it did the interests of the banks. It would have to be accompanied by even more radical measures, the nationalization of the banks and the introduction of labour control in industry. These measures would not put an end to Capitalism as an economic system, but would help to cripple Capital as a political force and would give the dictatorship of the proletariat a position of vantage for the actual advance towards Socialism.

It was during these three months of the spring and early summer of 1917 that the personality of Lenin became familiar to the Russian revolutionary masses and to the world in general. Everyone who wished to see or hear him had only to go to the street before the Kshesinsky House or to any other public meeting where he spoke daily. Never was he in better form as an orator. His manner of speaking was almost physiologically convincing, though there was nothing externally striking in

it. He carried away his audience by the clarity of his exposition ; by the unexpected familiarity and simplicity of his ideas and arguments, which made the plainest listener recognize, in what was expressed by the orator, what he had always felt ; his way was varied repetition which left nothing unsaid, presenting the argument 'in the round' and hammering it into the laziest heads.

Nothing could be more opposed to Lenin's manner—within the limits of genuine revolutionary oratory—than that of Trotsky. Trotsky arrived in Petrograd a month later than Lenin, having undergone what Lenin had wisely avoided—internment by the British authorities. From the outset of the war, Trotsky had adopted an internationalist attitude, the evolution of which had led him by now to share the views of Lenin. His brilliant and ambitious personality at once gave him a place second only to Lenin's in the Bolshevik camp (though it was not till August that he officially joined the party), and his name came to be inseparably associated with Lenin's. His brilliant, fiery, demagogic speeches at the Cirque Moderne before mixed audiences, where workmen were lost in a crowd of soldiers and every kind of poorer townspeople, kindled revolutionary enthusiasm and hatred. Their effect was as great as Lenin's, but behind Lenin's there was what was absent in Trotsky's—a clear logic and cold

certainty of what was being done and what should be done. Lenin, while he brought out the revolutionary passion of his audiences, made them think, transforming their feelings into ideas. Even on the eve of the great revolutionary assault, Lenin was as much a propagandist as an agitator.

For the bourgeoisie and for the 'social-patriots' Lenin before long became the devil incarnate, and the Bolsheviks a race of savages not to be gauged by ordinary human standards. This was to a large extent due to a genuine inability to understand a mind so alien to them, and to a genuine inhibition from understanding the mind of the masses. Anti-Bolshevik propaganda was handicapped from the outset by this inability and this inhibition. The enemies of Lenin could invent nothing better than the story that Lenin was a paid agent of the German Staff. After the 'July days' the Kerensky government officially charged Lenin with high treason, not for his anti-war propaganda—in a 'free Russia' such a charge would not have been admitted—but for relations with the German Staff. The masses were still so convinced of the integrity of their 'Socialist' leaders that many of the soldiers believed the silly lie when it was broadcast by Kerensky and his agents. This, however, only happened after the 'July days.'

During the two months that preceded them

the discrepancy between the policy of the Government and of the Soviet leaders (who were now at one) on the one hand, and the sentiment of the masses, grew unceasingly. But the Soviets continued to be the central nerve of political life, and the real repository of power. The immediate 'link by getting hold of which one would control the whole chain' was consequently for Lenin the watchword of 'all power to the Soviets.' Till July there was a serious hope that this could be achieved by peaceful means; a main feature of the Soviet constitution being re-election of every delegate at will, the Bolsheviks could, at any time, hope to achieve their end by merely obtaining a majority. But these hopes were frustrated by the turn taken by the events.

The 'Kerensky offensive,' launched in Galicia in the beginning of July, brought the tension between the leaders and the masses to breaking point. On 16th (3rd) July the indignation of the workmen and soldiers of Petrograd broke out. Lenin and his collaborators were still uncertain as to the extent of the revolutionary discontent of the Petrograd people, and were not yet prepared for the seizure of power. They regarded the demonstrations that were fixed for 16th July as a trial of forces. The events showed the Petrograd masses quite ripe for a Bolshevik revolution and in possession of a powerful military arm—for the Baltic Fleet was ready as

one man to follow the lead of Lenin. An army of seamen, led by the Bolshevik officer, Lieutenant Raskolnikov, came to Petrograd from Kronstadt on their own initiative. But Lenin did not profit by this spontaneous explosion of revolutionary energy. It is probable that it exceeded his expectations and that he was unprepared for the opportunity. On the other hand, a *coup d'état* in Petrograd alone might not have been recognized by the Provinces or at the Front. In the former, Bolshevik influence had scarcely penetrated outside the industrial districts; of the latter, only the Northern sectors (nearest to Petrograd) were at all seriously affected.

In any case, it was not Lenin but the reactionary military clique about Kerensky that reaped profit from the July days. The Baltic seamen were disarmed and sent back to Kronstadt; Bolshevik headquarters were looted by the army cadets; a number of Bolshevik leaders put in prison; the lie about Lenin's relations with the German Staff was broadcast; he was declared a traitor, and an order issued for his arrest. Lenin appears to have been cut to the quick by the calumny forged against him, and his natural reaction was to vindicate his political integrity before the deceived masses by delivering himself to the authorities to stand trial. But in the state things were, Lenin might easily have been lynched by the officers and cadets, and

the Bolshevik executive decided to take no risks. They passed a resolution that he should go into hiding, and reluctantly, but with his usual sense of discipline, Lenin submitted.

The 'July days,' followed as they were by the disastrous defeat of Tarnopol, which showed that the army was not in a state to fight the Germans, resulted in a definite turn towards counter-revolution. Kerensky became the head of a coalition, which had the support of the Soviet leaders on the one hand, and of the bourgeoisie and the army command on the other. The new government *bloc* definitely headed towards dictatorship. But instead of one there were two rival candidates for the dictatorship, the Prime Minister, Kerensky, and the Commander-in-Chief, Kornilov. And it was the latter's precipitate and premature action that ruined the whole game of the counter-revolutionaries. Early in September he sent Kerensky an ultimatum, supporting it by several cavalry divisions. Kerensky, suddenly remembering his democratic origin, turned for help to the Soviets. Kornilov's action was a godsend for the Bolsheviks. At the approach of Kornilov's cavalry to Petrograd, the masses rose as one man to defend the revolutionary capital. The Bolsheviks were foremost in organizing the defence, and their prestige made a tremendous leap upwards. The masses saw that they were the *only* party whose leaders had

not dallied with counter-revolution, and who were uncompromisingly on the side of the people against the bourgeoisie and the agents of the Allies. The situation was such that once more, as in April, the power might have peacefully and bloodlessly passed to the Soviets. The feeling of the masses, and even of the rank and file of the Menshevik and S.-R. intelligentsia, was bitterly opposed to a new coalition. But the Soviet leaders, with Tseretelli and Dan at their head, once more betrayed the people's cause. They patched up a new coalition government which was so counter-revolutionary that its extreme Left was formed by its two military members—General Verkhovsky and Admiral Verderevsky, who were not even Socialists, but merely sincere Democrats and competent soldiers. They told their colleagues that the army could not and would not continue war, and that steps must be taken towards peace and demobilization before it was too late. But they were overruled by Kerensky and his supporters. Such an end to the seemingly promising outcome of the Kornilov crisis made inevitable the second Revolution.

All this time Lenin had remained 'underground,' hiding in a workman's lodging in a suburb of Petrograd; after that in a hut on an isolated farm near the Finnish frontier; and, finally, in Helsingfors in the house of the Chief of the Municipal Police, who was a Social-

Democrat and an Internationalist. Though relations were made difficult by the necessity of keeping clear of the agents of Kerensky, Lenin was all the time in close contact with the Central and the Petrograd Committees of the Party, and continued to direct its policy. As always when condemned to relative inactivity, he profited by it to devote more time to work of more theoretical and less immediate interest. It was now that he wrote *The State and Revolution*, one of his greatest works, in which he gave systematic form to the ideas he had given expression to in his more actual writings of April to July. The book remained unfinished, for the developments that followed the Kornilov crisis obliged him to turn once more to immediately practical problems. He did not complain of this interruption, for, as he said in a post-script to the first edition of the unfinished work, 'it is pleasanter and more profitable to be going through a revolutionary experience than to be writing about it.'

CHAPTER VIII

THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION

THE October Revolution is the central fact in the life of Lenin and the one which makes him what he is in history. It was not only the first successful Proletarian Revolution, it was the first Revolution which displayed that complete co-ordination between the imperfectly expressed, dimly felt demands of the masses with the adequate leadership of scientific revolutionaries. The only revolution in the past, the only bourgeois revolution that comes anywhere near it, is the August insurrection of 1792. But if the actual leadership in the August days was adequate (perhaps even superior to the tactical—as distinguished from the strategic—leadership in the October Revolution), the preparation for it was quite different. It was an emergency action, throughout empirical and carried out on the spur of the moment. It is sufficient to compare Danton with Lenin to see the difference between this greatest achievement of bourgeois revolutionaries and the first successful action of revolutionary Socialists. Danton was, as Marx has said, the greatest tactical leader of a

revolution there ever was, but he belonged to a pre-scientific age. He had not all his life prepared for the Tenth of August, and he was unable to express his intuitive knowledge of what to do in universally useful forms. His magnificent 'De l'audace, de l'audace et encore de l'audace' is a typically empirical apophthegm that can be interpreted in a sense that would stultify it. Proletarian revolutionaries are in a different situation. They have in the practical historical science of Marx and Engels an admirable instrument for the understanding of current history, a method of historical knowledge which by explaining the past and the present gives real help to those who are engaged in forming the future. The possession of the Marxian method—the first scientific method in history—by the Revolutionary Socialist gives him an immense advantage over the pre-scientific revolutionary of the era of bourgeois Revolution, and, indeed, over every non-Marxian politician of to-day.

But the Marxian method is not an easy weapon to handle. It is like the strongbow of Ulysses that would not work in weak hands. Its dangers are twofold, and essentially similar to the dangers to which the soldier is exposed in applying at war the rules of military science he has learned in time of peace. The first danger is a lack of faith in theoretical knowledge. A proposition theoretically accepted may not

be applied when the moment arrives to apply it because the revolutionary's faith in what he has learned from books is not sufficient to force him to difficult and dangerous action. (Such, for instance, was the mistake of the Hungarian Communists who knew that they must not enter on agreements with the non-Revolutionary Socialists, but did it from sheer weakness.) The second danger is of an opposite nature, and consists in erecting into a dogma and a set of rules of thumb what is primarily a *dialectical* method. The Marxist for whom the dialectical outlook has not become his very life-blood will use the Marxian method at his peril. He must always actively and organically remember that a law is an abstraction from concrete facts, an algebraical formula which is given a numerical value only by a given concrete situation.

The phrase of 'man of action' is thus seen to be an inadequate term for Lenin. His action was not based on intuitive processes of thought, characteristic of the empiricist, which cannot be reconstructed by the thinker. Lenin's thought preceded and accompanied his action, making it 'transparent'—as 'transparent' as economic relations must become under Socialism. It always remains within the field of consciousness and completely analysable. This leads to the fact, which may seem incredible to bourgeois politicians and historians, that Lenin's writings, which are a direct part of his action, have at

the same time all the characteristics of the most objective history. The letters he wrote to the Central Committee before the greatest action of his life may be recommended as the most objective and historically valid account of the state of real political forces in Russia on the eve of the October Revolution.

As soon as it became clear that the Kornilov crisis, instead of leading to a peaceful transfer of the power to the Soviets, had ended in a 'rotten coalition,' Lenin saw it was time to act. As early as the end (middle) of September he sent a letter to the Central Committee, advising the party to abstain from participation either in the non-official 'Democratic Conference' that the 'Socialist' parties were arranging, or in the official 'Provisional Council of the Republic' (a sort of assembly of notables intended to give a 'constitutional' semblance to the Kerensky Government), and definitely to steer towards a new revolution. The Central Committee turned down his proposals, and the Bolsheviks took part in the 'Democratic Conference.' But every day the situation was growing tenser and tenser. The peasants, waxing impatient at the failure of the Government to give them the squires' land, began to rise all over the country. Delegates—some of them non-Socialist officers—came up from the Front to Petrograd to tell the Soviets that the army was not going to fight any longer; that it would soon leave the

trenches ; and that it could not be satisfied by either land or liberty, but only by peace and demobilization. The machine of administration was collapsing, the work of the railways dying down and the metropolis stood before the immediate menace of hunger. The Capitalists adopted a determined policy of closing down their works, thus creating masses of unemployed. Riga and the Moonsund positions, the key to the Gulf of Finland, were in the hands of the Germans, and there were grave grounds to believe that the high command had adopted a policy of giving in to the enemy so as the better to terrorize the people into obedience. At the same time democratic opinion was veering to the Left with great rapidity. By the end of September the Soviets of Petrograd and Moscow and of all the principal provincial towns had Bolshevik majorities, and the Petrograd Soviet had elected Trotsky for President. The municipal elections were also beginning to turn to the profit of the Bolsheviks : in Moscow they received 51 per cent. of the votes. The great majority of the peasant soviets, without becoming Bolshevik, adopted the Bolshevik cry of no coalition with the bourgeoisie. Inside the Government parties, large left wings were growing, and the 'Internationalist Mensheviks' (led by Martov) and the 'Left S.-R.s' were definitely more in sympathy with Lenin than with Kerensky. At the same time the first

serious mutiny in the German Fleet (September) raised new hopes of the Revolution spreading to other countries.

In a succession of letters to the Central Committee, Lenin urged on them his reasons for making haste with the insurrection. He insisted that it was not only possible and popular with the masses, but necessary from the point of view of plain administrative expediency: the continuation of the present régime could only increase the growing disorganization and would culminate in general anarchy. Opportunities did not last for ever. 'The loss of time,' he quoted the famous dictum of Peter the Great, 'is like unto irretrievable death.' If the proletariat did not establish the dictatorship soon, the bourgeoisie would forestall it and substitute a firm military rule for the present impotent administration. This was not as yet possible, but events were moving rapidly. Petrograd might fall almost any day—the bourgeois command would be only too glad to sacrifice it to the Germans. This would be doubly profitable to the cause of reaction, for it would irremediably compromise the still quasi-democratic government of Kerensky and the remains of the system of dyarchy, and would deliver the only two organized revolutionary forces—the Baltic Fleet and the Petrograd workmen—into the hands of foreign Imperialism.

It was, however, only on 18th (5th) October

that the Party obeyed at last the voice of common sense and of revolutionary duty: its withdrawal from the Council of the Republic implied already the decision to fight. On the 23rd (10th) this decision was formally taken, and on the 29th (16th) it was decided to begin to prepare for the battle. All this delay, which could have been avoided and might have ended tragically, was due to Trotsky and to the 'party intelligentsia.' The men of the Party 'machine'—Sverdlov and Stalin—gave their full support to Lenin; while the rank and file of the Party, the seamen and the workmen, were ready to strike out at any moment. Trotsky's reasons for delay were due to his new position as President of the Petrograd Soviet and to his consequent inclination towards 'Soviet legality'—he wanted to have the Revolution on the day of the opening of the Second Congress of Soviets, which was fixed for 7th November (25th October), and which would show that the Bolsheviks had behind them the provincial masses as well as those of Petrograd. Lenin was against this show of legality, but ultimately it happened as Trotsky wished, chiefly owing to the delay caused by the resistance of the 'party intelligentsia,' represented by Kamenev and Zinoviev. They were afraid of armed insurrection because they over-valued the forces of the Government, but still more because they were afraid of the party's becoming

isolated from, and boycotted by, its immediate neighbours to the right, the Internationalist Mensheviks and the Left S.-R.s. When the insurrection was finally decided upon, the organizers of the insurrection—the Military Revolutionary Committee—proceeded to a lengthy (and it would seem unnecessary) campaign of propaganda in the barracks and workshops which absorbed all the best party forces. Lenin knew very well that the only real military force on the side of the Bolsheviks was the Baltic Fleet. The seamen were not so politically mature and conscious as the Petrograd workmen. There were many Left S.-R.s and Anarchists among them, but they were grimly determined to fight, and they knew how to fight. The workmen of Petrograd were politically much more reliable than the seamen and quite as determined, but they had never fought, and their fighting value was doubtful. As for the remainder of the garrison, it could be relied upon to be in passive sympathy with the Revolution but it had long ceased to count as a fighting force. The question was whether the Government would be able to muster up a force of Cossacks and Cadets that would be equal to opposing the sailors. Hence the cautious—perhaps over-cautious—tactics of the Military Revolutionary Committee.

Lenin did not take a direct part in the tactical direction of the insurrection. But its tactics—

the seizure of vital centres, telegraph, power station, banks, etc.—put into practice the conclusions he had drawn from the events of 1905. As for the political and strategic leadership, it was entirely his. Without Lenin, the second Revolution would certainly have taken place—the situation made it unavoidable. But it would have been a chaotic and disorganized rising of despairing and leaderless masses. It was he who, by doing what no other leader would do—by understanding and making his own the demands of the masses—canalized the Revolution into conscious political action, which led to the formation of an efficient fighting government that spoke the language of the masses and treated its enemies, in Marx's phrase, in the plebeian way.

The right-wing Socialists and Democrats of all hues have brought two principal charges against the October Revolution—it was anti-democratic and demagogic: anti-democratic, because it was made by a conspiracy of the minority regardless of the will of the majority; demagogic, because while Lenin promised the masses land, bread and peace, he gave them, as the result of the Revolution, only the land. The first of these charges is easiest to deal with. If by 'democratic' we understand parliamentary and liberal, it is obvious that the accusation is true. But no revolutionary Socialist ever had any respect for abstract rights and liberties, as

distinct from the concrete possibility of profiting by them. That the October Revolution gave more concrete liberty to the masses than they had had even when, under the 'dyarchy,' Russia was 'the freest country in the world' has never been seriously contradicted. For the liberty of the masses, for a Marxist, does not mean the legally recorded right of voting and talking, but the fact that things get done according to their will. And if we restore to Democracy its real, classical and etymological meaning, the meaning given to it by the Greeks, by Rousseau, and by the Jacobins, the meaning of rule by the common People, by the working masses, then there can be no doubt about the democratic character of the October Revolution. That Lenin acted in accordance with the unexpressed and unrecorded, but plainly intelligible, will of the people is a fact so obvious as to need no demonstration. The ease with which Soviet rule extended to the whole of the country, meeting with no opposition except from the privileged classes, was afterwards rightly interpreted by Lenin as better than a formal mandate for the Soviet Government.

The other accusation is, on the face of it, more cogent. It has to be admitted that bread and peace played a prominent part in Lenin's agitation on the eve of the insurrection—and that its success made bread scarcer and led to three years of Civil War and the Peace of

Brest, which was certainly not the peace that Lenin had promised. But what would have been the alternative if Lenin had acted as Martov (and Kamenev) wanted him to? Peace all the same would have had to be asked for, and the conditions imposed by Germany would have been as cruel as those she imposed at Brest, but there would have been no Bolshevik government to restore the situation afterwards. A civil war would all the same have been started by the Kornilovists, but there would have been no dictatorship to oppose it. Even the most democratic government of S.-R.s and Mensheviks, freed from Kerensky, and supported by the Constituent Assembly, would not have been able to cut the Gordian knot connecting Russia with her Imperialist Allies. The country would have become a theatre of war between Germany and the Entente, but there would have been no government in Moscow to save it from utter ruin. Only a dictatorship, based on the will of the best-organized masses and genuinely independent of either of the belligerent sides, was capable of saving the country. Twenty-eight years ago, Plekhanov had said that, if the Russian Revolution was to triumph, it would only triumph as a workmen's revolution. His prophecy came true. But in September 1917 it became clear that if Russia was to survive at all, it could only survive as a Workmen's

republic and the home of Revolutionary Internationalism. It is the great paradox of the October Revolution that the Internationalist Bolsheviks were the only force working for the independence of the nation—not of the nation of the bourgeois, of course, but of that of the workmen and peasants. The patriots (whether they realized it or not) were working for the transformation of Russia into a semi-colonial possession of the Allies. The October Revolution has made, in Russian, the word patriot a synonym for the word traitor. All these arguments (developed afterwards by Lenin in a series of articles written at the end of 1918, at the time when the S.-R.s were beginning to realize their tragic rôle), are not, of course, the main argument by which to justify the second Revolution of the year of 1917, for its ultimate justification can only be its success in forwarding the triumph of International Socialism. But they are quite sufficient to refute whatever can be advanced against Lenin's insurrection by the patriotic democrats.

The insurrection took place on 7th November (25th October¹), and the new régime was officially proclaimed in the late hours of the same day at the opening of the Second Con-

¹ Hence the traditional name of October Revolution. The Gregorian Calendar was only introduced in Russia by the Soviet Government as from 1st February 1918.

gress of Soviets. The Congress was overwhelmingly Bolshevik, the minority consisting mainly of Left S.-R.s who, though they had not taken part in the Insurrection, were definitely on its side. By the moment of this announcement the Capital was in the hands of the Military Revolutionary Committee, with the exception of the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government (without Kerensky, who had escaped in a United States diplomatic car) was sitting. It surrendered a few hours later. The announcement of the Victory was made by Lenin, who now appeared in public for the first time since the 'July days,' and was received with tremendous enthusiasm. The new Government was formed on the following day, with Lenin as President and Trotsky at the Foreign Office. It was given the name of 'Council of People's Commissars' (*Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov*, or, in short, *Sovnarkom*), so as to avoid the term of 'minister' rendered odious by the Provisional Government. None but Bolsheviks were included in this first Sovnarkom. The Internationalist Mensheviks and the Left S.-R.s, who had been opposed to Kerensky and the coalition, began at once to clamour for admission, and for the constitution of a 'united front of the Democracy.' Their demands received real political importance, thanks to the support given them by the Railwaymen's Union ('Vikzhel'). The action of the Vikzhel,

which declared itself neutral as between the Bolsheviks and Kerensky, and thus for the moment conjured up serious difficulties for the new Government, produced a strong impression on the Bolshevik 'party intelligentsia.' The flower of the Bolshevik intellectuals, including Kamenev, Zinoviev, Rykov, Lunacharsky, Ryazanov, refused to support Lenin unless he agreed to a coalition with the other Socialist parties. But this, as Lenin saw, was merely a movement of 'individual intellectuals.' The Party as a whole supported him. Lenin himself was not averse to collaboration with such parties as would really bring him the support of new sections of the democracy, especially of the peasants who were unrepresented at the Second Congress. But knowing that he represented the will of the proletariat and of the army, he put down in an uncompromising form his conditions for such a collaboration. It could be only with those who accepted his programme of all power to the Soviets, immediate steps towards the cessation of the war, immediate recognition of self-determination of nationalities inside Russia, immediate nationalization of land, labour control of industry, and labour conscription for the bourgeoisie. Martov refused these conditions. The Left S.-R.s were ready to accept them, but waited for the decision of the Congress of Peasant Soviets, which was to meet in a few days.

One of the first measures proposed by Lenin to the Second Congress had for its aim to bring over the Peasants to the side of the Soviet Government. This was the 'Land Decree,' passed by the Congress at its second sitting on 8th November (26th October). It was the culmination of Lenin's land policy of 1905, for it started from the idea that in this matter, which was immediately vital for the peasants, the proletariat must be guided exclusively by the peasants' demands. The Decree, plain and short, proclaimed the confiscation of all non-peasant estates, with the live stock and equipment attached to them, and placed them in the hands of the local Land Committees elected by the peasants. This was entirely in harmony with the peasants' demands. But Lenin was prepared to go further and, in the elaboration of a detailed land law, to submit entirely to the demands of the peasant representatives. The Congress of Peasant Soviets was at first inclined to be hostile, but Lenin brought them over to his programme of Peace and Land, and the outcome was that the Left S.-R.s, as representatives of the peasants, were given three seats in the Sovnarkom, including that of Commissar of Agriculture.

The Bolshevik programme was honestly carried out by the Sovnarkom. The nationalization of banks, labour control in industry, labour conscription for the bourgeoisie, were

all introduced in the course of the first weeks. For a long time the new Government remained imperfectly organized and mild in its methods. The bourgeoisie, though badly hit by the new legislation, was not otherwise molested. This did not prevent it from flatly refusing to recognize or to co-operate with the new Government. To boycott the Soviet authorities became a hall-mark of respectability, and those employees who pretended to any degree of gentility—such as the bank clerks and the ‘telephone young ladies’—joined in the boycott with enthusiasm. But the Russian bourgeoisie, as the Manifesto of the First Social-Democratic Congress had said, was cowardly, and cowardly not only before Tsarism, but before its new class enemies. From the outset it had hatred enough to commence a civil war, but it had not the courage. Only a small minority of the officers’ corps, consisting mainly of superior staff and general officers on the one hand, and of young cadets on the other, were capable of resistance. Apart from that the conquest of the greater part of the country for the Revolution proceeded almost unimpeded. Still the state of mind of the bourgeoisie and of the ‘democratic’ politicians throughout the country was such that the Bolsheviks could not but feel themselves surrounded by people who were prevented from action only by their great cowardice. This, together with the growing tide of illicit trade,

led to the establishment of a Special Committee for combating Counter-revolution and Profiteering—the famous Cheka—which, however, remained mild and rather ineffective till the beginning of the real Civil War.

There remained the problem of the Constituent Assembly. The elections were held about a week after the October Revolution, the nominations having been made several weeks before that event. They gave a majority to the S.-R.s, the Bolsheviks getting about 25 per cent. of the votes cast. The Constituent Assembly met on 18th (5th) January 1918. It refused to consider the Soviet Government as lawful, or even to discuss any of its propositions, and was dissolved the same night. The political wisdom of the action stands to-day beyond doubt. Lenin's reasons for it were stated by him in his *Theses on the Constituent Assembly*,¹ published in the *Pravda* on 8th January (26th December). They may be summed up as follows :

The demand for a Constituent Assembly had had its lawful place in the Bolshevik programme, as the completest expression of the principles of bourgeois democracy. But ever since March 1917 the Party had pointed out the superiority of Soviet democracy to parliamentary democracy. Soviet democracy was the only form of government capable of assuring a

¹ *Works*, xv., pp. 50-54.

relatively painless transition to Socialism. The Soviet system was more democratic than bourgeois parliamentarism because it established a closer and more concrete link between elector and elected; in particular because it implied the right of the constituents to recall and replace their representatives at any time. Even according to the formal standards of parliamentary democracy the Constituent Assembly could not be regarded as satisfactory—the S.-R. members, who were the majority, had been returned according to lists nominated before its schism into a Right and Left wing. The masses were attracted to it by the names of the left-wingers, who, however, stood too low in the party lists for many of them to be elected.¹ But much more important than these formal grounds was the fact that events had taken place since the elections which had changed the whole distribution of political forces, and clearly shown that the masses were on the side of the Soviet Government. It held its mandate from the Congress of the Peasants' Soviets as well as from those of the Workmen and Soldiers. In the present state of things, when civil war was being prepared and the problem of peace demanded immediate solution, the question of the Constituent Assembly could only be solved from

¹ Here is a good illustration. For the City of Moscow the S.-R. list began with two Right-wing names, followed by a long succession of Left-wingers. The votes cast for the list gave it only two seats, so all the Left-wingers remained unreturned.

the point of view of the real interests of the working classes, not from those of abstract constitutional principle. The best peaceful issue for it would be an unqualified recognition of the Soviet Revolution and the acceptance of the principle of re-election at will. Failing that, the problem could only be solved in the revolutionary way. And so it was.

The dissolution of the Constituent Assembly finally laid down that Russia was to be a Soviet Republic, but the constitution of the new republic was not finally adopted till several months later, by the Fifth Congress of Soviets in July 1918. That had been preceded by the Seventh Party Congress, at which Lenin's proposal for the change of the name of the Party from Social-Democratic to Communist was carried. As the term Communist has given rise to much ignorant comment and as its origin is usually misinterpreted, it may be the place here to point out, firstly, that Communist was the name of the Party founded by Marx on the eve of 1848 and perpetuated in the title of *The Communist Manifesto*; and, secondly, that the significance attached to it by Lenin was two-fold. It referred on the one hand to *Communism*—that is to say, to the higher stage of Socialism under which the principle of 'To everyone according to his needs, from everyone according to his ability' would obtain—as the ultimate goal of the Party; on the other hand it empha-

sized the tradition of the Paris *Commune* as the first attempt to create a political order that would become the stepping-stone to Socialism. As for the name Social-Democratic, it originally indicated the acceptance by the German Socialists of political—'democratic'—methods and was intended to be a repudiation of Anarchism. Marx and Engels put up with the new name, but they never liked it, always regarding Communist as preferable. Its rejection by Lenin was conditioned chiefly by the necessity of drawing a clear dividing line between his followers and the opportunist Socialists of the Second International.

CHAPTER IX

THE PEACE OF BREST

IN the pre-revolutionary stage of the War, peace was not for Lenin an object in itself. It was desirable only as the outcome of international social revolution. But in Russia the demand of the people for peace was so unambiguous and insistent, the refusal of the bourgeoisie to consider it so obstinate, and the failure of the 'moderate Socialists' to obtain it so lamentable, that the cause of Peace and Social Revolution became indissolubly linked. And while for Lenin and the Bolsheviks it was obvious that a satisfactory peace could only follow the extension of the Revolution to the other belligerent countries, for the masses—especially for the soldiers—the question practically reduced itself to a demand for peace at any cost. The obvious determination of the mobilized masses not to allow another winter campaign made it imperative for any government to put an end to the war—by means of a general peace if possible, but failing that by coming to terms with the Central Powers. Outside the Bolshevik Party only unpolitical men or excep-

tionally honest soldiers like General Verkhovsky made the necessary conclusions, and this was the principal single reason of the fall of the Kerensky régime. When the Bolsheviks assumed power, they did so with the solemn understanding that they would take immediate and sincere steps to secure peace.

On the first day of the new régime Lenin introduced before the Congress of Soviets a 'Peace Decree,' which was passed unanimously. This document¹ is a remarkable instance of that intransigence of principle combined with the realistic acceptance of fact that are so characteristic of its author. It begins with the statement that peace without annexations or indemnities (the term 'without annexations' implying self-determination for all nations annexed by stronger powers previously to the present war, as well as during it) is the only peace that may be regarded as just and democratic. But as it was the greatest crime against humanity to continue, against the will of the people, the present war, the Government did not regard this condition as a *sine qua non* and was ready to consider any serious offer of peace. It renounced the use of secret diplomacy and would publish the secret treaties concluded by Tsarist Russia. A general armistice for not less than three months was proposed, to be followed by a conference in which all the

¹ *Works*, xv., pp. 14-16.

nationalities affected by the war, including those having no statehood, would be represented. The message ended with a special appeal to the proletariat of England, France and Germany, and to their great traditions—English Chartism, the French Revolutions and German Socialism. As is generally known, the Allies made no answer to this message. They had decided not to recognize the Government by which the Russian people had replaced the supporters of the War and the Entente, and demonstratively addressed a note of protest against the Peace Decree to the Commander-in-Chief, who, when ordered by the Sovnarkom to open negotiations for an armistice, refused to obey. He was replaced by a Bolshevik, Krylenko, and on 27th (14th) November plenipotentiaries were sent to the Germans. On the same day an offer of general peace was again made to the Allies, with the same result. On 5th December (22nd November) an Armistice was signed, and on 12th December (29th November) peace negotiations began at Brest Litovsk.

In the meantime the principle of self-determination of nationalities, in so far as those of the former Tsarist Empire were concerned, was carried into practice. The Soviet Government proclaimed the right of all non-Russian peoples to secede from the Russian Republic, explicitly recognizing the independence of Finland and Ukraine, though the Finnish Government was

bourgeois and the Ukrainian composed of petit-bourgeois Chauvinists.

When the Brest negotiations started, there was still a faint hope that the Allies would change their attitude and join them. On the other hand, it was known that revolutionary feeling in Germany was growing and, as long as one had no exact information of what was going on behind the Front, it was possible to hope that it would seriously affect the attitude of the German delegation. But by degrees it became apparent that the Allies were quite happy to leave Revolutionary Russia to her fate, and that the German Revolution was still in the germ. The probability of having to sign a peace that would be based on principles very different from those proclaimed in the Peace Decree began to turn into a certainty, and as usual Lenin was the first to realize this and to draw the conclusions. On 20th (7th) January 1918 he presented to the Central Committee twenty-one theses on the Peace,¹ which forestalled the entire course of events and, had they been accepted by the Party in good time, would have avoided many sufferings.

They began with an analysis of the situation at home, which led to the conclusion that 'the cause of Socialism in Russia stood in need of time, of a breathing space, to complete its work of suppressing the bourgeoisie. Socialist revo-

¹ *Works*, xv., pp. 63-69.

lution in Europe was sure to come and to triumph in the long run, but it would be a mistake to found the policy of the Socialist Government in Russia on the probability of a Socialist revolution in Europe, and in particular in Germany, within the next six months or so. It would be blind gambling. The interests of the Socialist Revolution in Russia were alone to be taken into consideration. Germany was certain to propose very hard terms, and the question must be faced 'whether to accept an annexationist peace or begin a revolutionary war. Half-way solutions were excluded by the nature of the case.' 'Some comrades thought that to enter on a bargain with imperialists would be to repudiate the fundamental principles of Proletarian Internationalism.' 'The argument is plainly fallacious. When workmen who have the worst of it in a strike sign conditions that go contrary to their interests and profit the capitalists, they do not betray Socialism. Another argument in favour of war is that peace would make us, in practice, the agents of German Imperialism. But war would make us the agents of Anglo-French Imperialism. Whichever way we turn we cannot escape from one or other Imperialist connection.' The right conclusion is that, from the moment a Socialist government is victorious in one country, problems must be viewed, not from the point of view of preference for one or other

Imperialism, but only from the point of view of the best conditions for the development and strengthening of the Socialist Revolution where it had already begun. If the German internationalists were to guarantee to us a Revolution at a given time, we might reconsider the question, but they could not promise any such thing, and Liebknecht himself insisted that the problem must be solved from the point of view of the Russian Socialist Revolution alone. The peasant majority in the Russian army was for peace at any price. The Revolution had been the work of the workmen and the poorer peasants, but the latter would cease to support the workmen in case of a revolutionary war. The continuation of the war might lead to Germany's concluding peace with a non-Socialist government. Finally, 'a war of a Socialist republic against bourgeois nations can at the present moment be regarded as a revolutionary war only if it is conducted with the aim, clearly and whole-heartedly accepted by the Socialist army, of overthrowing the bourgeoisie in other countries.' Such an aim was at present impossible. The war, if continued, would be in practice a war for the liberation of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. But it was more important to assure the survival of a Socialist Republic than to secure self-determination for two or three nations.

Lenin's theses were rejected by the majority

of the Bolshevik Central Committee, and Lenin, who, it would seem, still had a faint glimmer of hope that his opponents would prove right, and Germany unable to do her worst, did not at first exercise all his influence to impose his policy. The opinion of most of the party organizations (including Moscow and the Baltic Fleet), as well as that of the Left S.-R.s, was against an 'annexationist' peace. Only Petrograd was on Lenin's side, and of the members of the Central Committee only five—Sverdlov, Zinoviev, Stalin, Sokolnikov and Smilga—supported his view from the outset. At a conference of members of the Central Committee with representative party workers, Lenin's point of view received only fifteen out of sixty-three votes. Thirty-two—the future 'Left Communists'—voted for 'Revolutionary War,' while sixteen supported the policy suggested by Trotsky of 'neither war nor peace,' which meant that, while no peace was to be signed, the army, in case of a German offensive, was to offer no resistance. This latter policy was also supported by the Left S.-R.s.

There was a fundamental difference, in their attitude to the peace question, between the spectacular revolutionary, Trotsky, and the proletarian leader, Lenin. For Trotsky the peace conference—whose sittings, in compliance with the democratic demands of the Russian delegation, were public and communicated to the

whole world—was a tribune for propaganda, and the primary duty of the Russians was to save the face of the Russian Revolution in the eyes of the foreign workmen and of the world in general. It was essential to make it clear to every one that Soviet Russia would not submit to an imperialistic peace unless forced by extreme necessity. Hence his policy of procrastination, which happened to be in complete agreement with the policy of the militarist party in Germany that did not want peace with Russia, but victory over Russia, for every day of delay contributed to the disintegration of the Russian army. Lenin, fully appreciating the opportunities offered by the peace conference for world-wide propaganda, regarded the primary duty of the Soviet Government to preserve as much as could be preserved of the Socialist Republic in Russia. It was consequently more important to secure peace on the most advantageous terms obtainable than to impress the world with the spectacle of the Revolution ceding only before violence.

It would be a gross mistake to interpret this attitude of Lenin's as in any sense 'patriotic.' At a meeting of the Central Committee held on 21st (8th) January, Lenin's supporter, Zinoviev, had slid down into such a patriotic interpretation. In answering him, Lenin said that the German Revolution was infinitely more important than the Russian, and that if it was

a question of sacrificing the Russian to the German proletariat, there could be no hesitation in doing so. But this was not the case. 'Germany so far was only big with revolution, while in Russia a perfectly healthy child had been born—a Socialist Republic—and it was screaming with all its might.' It was their duty to defend what existed already, and not to gamble on what was only an expectation.

Nevertheless, Trotsky had his way. On February 10th the German demands being recognized as unacceptable, the negotiations were broken off, and his formula—'neither war nor peace'—was put into practice. On the return of the delegation, the Central Committee met to decide on the course to be taken. Lenin insisted on the immediate acceptance of the terms rejected by Trotsky, but his proposal was turned down, six of the eleven present voting against it. On the same day the Germans announced that the armistice was at an end, and started an advance against the totally impotent Russian front, incalculable booty falling into their hands without any resistance. Even the best troops of the Petrograd sector, the Red Guards and the seamen, so precipitately retreated that, when the first panic passed, they returned about fifty miles to find no Germans before them. It was obvious that Lenin was right, and that the army was not fit for any kind of war.

When on February 18th news of the German

advance and the way it proceeded was received, the Central Committee met again. At first Lenin's proposal to send a telegram accepting the German conditions, and agreeing to consider even further conditions, was rejected by the same majority of one. A second meeting was called the same day. Lenin continued to insist on the immediate acceptance of the German terms, if they were anything short of a demand to overthrow the Soviet Government. 'If the Germans say that they demand the deposition of the Bolshevik Government, then of course we must fight,' for the only object of the peace was to preserve the Socialist Republic at any cost. But if that was not the case 'history will say that you let down the Revolution.' This time Lenin succeeded; Trotsky voted on his side, and this gave him a majority of one. So on 19th February the Council of Commissars sent a wire accepting the German conditions. These proved only more acceptable than the worst. They did not contain the demand for the deposition of the Soviet Government, but Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, Ukraine were to be detached from Russia and occupied by the Germans, who were also to occupy, till the end of the war, a strip of Russian territory running from the Gulf of Finland past Pskov and Homel to Rostov on the Don. The German reply was discussed in the Central Committee on the 23rd.

This time Lenin was drastic, threatening to

resign if the Party were to jeopardize the existence of the Socialist Republic by rejecting the German terms. The majority of the Committee was against him, only his constant supporters voting with him. But of the eight opponents, only four, including Bukharin, took on themselves the responsibility of voting against; Trotsky, Dzierzynski, Krestinsky and Joffe abstained from voting. The Council of Commissars consequently accepted the German terms, and a new delegation, headed by Sokolnikov, was sent to Brest. They signed the treaty of peace, but to emphasize that they were only ceding before brute force they refused to consider its terms in detail. At Versailles the Germans were not even allowed to repeat this gesture. The German militarists were victorious. But their victory was indeed Pyrrhic, and once again Lenin proved more far-sighted than they. The Peace of Brest did save the Socialist Republic in Russia, it did not save Germany from having to sign a year later the even more Carthaginian peace of Versailles.

The signature of the peace did not put an end to the question, for it had yet to be ratified by the Soviets, and with this purpose an Extraordinary Congress was called for 14th March. This was to be preceded by the Seventh Party Congress, which was to meet a week earlier (6th-8th March) and decide the course to be adopted by the Communists at the Congress of

Soviets. First, the eventuality of the Germans refusing to stop their advance on the acceptance of their terms by the Soviets, and after that the eventuality of the peace treaty being rejected by the Extraordinary Congress forced Lenin to face the possibility of having to continue the war. It was this possibility that brought him into contact with the Allies. Offers of help, in case of the resumption of war with Germany, were made by Allied representatives, the most serious emanating from President Wilson's unofficial agent, Colonel Robins. Lenin entered on unofficial negotiations with him, laying down as a condition *sine qua non* of the acceptance of American (or other Allied) help that such an acceptance should not affect the political independence of the Soviet Government. But Lenin never regarded the eventuality of accepting Allied help as anything but a second worst alternative to the fall of the Soviet Government.

The only result of these negotiations was President Wilson's message to the Extraordinary Congress, which he intended to be a non-committal form of encouraging it to war, and suggesting the possibility of American help. But the Congress was not subtle enough to understand the devious workings of the President's mind, and failed to understand his message. But even if its wording had been more explicit, there can be no doubt that Lenin would have done his best to bring over the

Congress to peace, and would have succeeded in doing so. For, from the moment the decision had been taken, he threw himself with all his might into a campaign in favour of the Peace and, in spite of strong resistance, won. The fight for peace by Lenin endured from the 23rd February, when the 'Tilsitt terms' proposed by Germany became known, to the 15th March, when they were at last ratified by the Congress, is perhaps the most instructive and heroic episode in the life of the great Revolutionary, and the one in which his greatness comes out with particular force.

Up to now Lenin had always been, in the classical sense of the word, a demagogue, a leader whose words were agreeable to the masses, awoke in them suppressed but natural feelings, and acted as a stimulus, not as a brake. Now, for the first time, he had to carry through a policy which, though consonant with the real will of the masses, demanded action that went counter to all the habits and prejudices of his nearest friends, and against which it was the easiest thing in the world to mobilize an army of convincing and familiar words. For the first time¹ Lenin had to use the common sense and sense of reality that had hitherto been in his hands the weapons of revolutionary offensive to counter the revolutionary phrase-

¹ For the first time on such a scale: the fight against the *Vpered* group was similar in miniature.

ology of his adherents. The campaign for the Peace of Brest opens a new period in Lenin's career, when the Revolutionary who had always been guided by Danton's principle of 'de l'audace, de l'audace et encore de l'audace' had to become a teacher of the art of retreating. But all his retreats, that of Brest and that of the Nep, were only made in order to be able to resume the advance under better conditions. The very way in which Lenin whole-heartedly accepted the unavoidable results of error and defeat was full of a determination which, if it cannot be called by Danton's word of *audace*, was a courage of the very highest order. The remarkable thing is that whatever seemingly unpopular policy he adopted, this never affected his popularity, for his policy was always consonant with the real, if unexpressed, will of the people and only opposed to the phraseology of 'undialectical' politicians.

In this case the opposition against Lenin was formed by a seceding group of Bolsheviks, who called themselves 'Left Communists.' They included Bukharin, Radek, Uritsky, Pokrovsky, Pyatakov and other very eminent party-workers, and were supported by the public opinion of perhaps the majority of the workmen. Behind the Left Communists stood the still more hostile opposition of the Left S.-R.s, representing the prejudices of the intelligentsia and the interests of the grain-producing peasants.

The Opposition insisted that the peace was 'obscene' (*pokhabny*, an expression that was given currency by the anti-Bolsheviks in the autumn of 1917) and dishonourable, and that the workmen and peasants must fight to save the Revolution from German Imperialism.

Lenin began by retorting that this was no more than 'revolutionary phrases' with no reality behind them. 'If,' he wrote on 21st February, 'the desire for a revolutionary war on the part of, say, the Petersburg and Moscow party organizations were not a mere phrase, we should have witnessed between October and January a different kind of facts : we should have seen demobilization firmly opposed . . . tens of thousands of agitators and volunteers sent to the front, . . . regiments formed and coalescing into a Red Army and recurring to means of terror to stop the demobilization.' From October onwards the Revolution had had too triumphant a progress. This had spoiled the revolutionaries and made them lose the habit of reverses. They must re-acquire it : 'If you are not able to fit in with the circumstances, if you are not prepared to creep on your belly in the mud, you are no Revolutionary but a windbag, because no other way is open to us, because history has not been so amiable as to bring Revolution to maturity at the same time in all countries.' The paper of the Opposition, called *The Communist*, goes on

clamouring about a dishonourable peace. 'No conscious revolutionary, they cry, will agree to such dishonour.' 'The paper's name ought not to be *The Communist*, but *The Słachcic*,¹ because its point of view is that of the *słachcic* who said as he died in a fine pose and sword in hand: "Peace is dishonour: War is honour."' "

To the attitude of the 'duelling gentleman' Lenin opposed the attitude of the workman who does not regard defeat in a strike as dishonourable but grins and bears it. He recalled the conduct of the Party after the defeat of the first Revolution, when it decided to enter the Duma, though this implied taking the oath to the Tsar. That, too, was dishonour, but the Party submitted to it because it was profitable to the cause of the Revolution. In 1807 Prussia signed the even harsher peace of Tilsitt, and that did not prevent her from emerging six years later more vigorous than ever. Those people who clamoured for a revolutionary war when we were incapable of conducting it were guilty of criminal frivolity. They had so far lost the sense of reality that, in their argument in favour of war, they invoked the fact that this was the time for it because the old army was still incompletely demobilized. Now, if there was one reason more than any other which rendered us particularly unfit for war,

¹ Polish gentleman, reputed for susceptibility in matters of honour.

it was precisely the continued existence of this imperfectly demobilized army, which was beyond repair. That sick limb had to be amputated before one could speak of war, which would become possible only on the basis of a new volunteer army of workmen.

Lenin's point of view won by twenty-eight votes against twelve at the Seventh Party Congress. At the Congress of Soviets, it received 784 Bolshevik votes against 261 Left S.-R.s and other minor groups. The 'Left Communists' abstained from voting, not to break the unity of the Party: later on, when events proved the wisdom of Lenin's course and the folly of not having followed it earlier, they all recognized their policy to have been mistaken.

But the Left S.-R.s stuck to their folly. They resigned from the Government and passed into opposition, which, however, remained within the bounds of loyalty to the Soviets for another few months.

The 'breathing space' during which the Revolution could rally up, collect its forces and affirm its position, was won. There could be no doubt that it would not last long, but the best must be made of it. The position of the Soviet power must be fortified; industry, controlled by the working class, must be developed; every energy must be directed towards constructive work. No sooner was the peace

concluded than Lenin began a campaign for the training of the workmen and of the Party for constructive and unromantic workdays. In a speech made before the Central Executive Committee on 29th April 1918, and in a pamphlet published the same day on *Current Tasks of the Soviet Government*,¹ he unfolded a programme to meet the new situation.

Former bourgeois revolutions had only one task before them—the purely political task of removing medieval fetters that prevented the free expansion of the economic forces of Capitalism. The economic tasks of the bourgeois revolutions were solved by the spontaneous economic efforts of the bourgeoisie itself. A Socialist Revolution had to solve its own economic tasks. In the past it had only a few starting-points for such a solution in the form of the monopolistic forms of advanced Capitalism. The task before the proletariat was to pass from the mere suppression of the bourgeoisie to the administration of its legacy, and to acquire virtues that it had always considered bourgeois—the virtues of economy, of hard work, of honesty, and of discipline in work. We had ridiculed these virtues when they went to profit the capitalists, but now that the workers were the owners, they could not do without them. ‘The capacity for administration is not innate, but is bred by experience. We have

¹ *Works*, xv., pp. 193–254.

not yet had such experience.' We shall have to invite capitalist administrators to work under our control. We must raise labour discipline (as the best workmen have already realized), raise the productivity of labour, raise the general cultural level of the people, adopt that which was sound in, for instance, the Taylor system. The task implied a co-ordination between the good will of the masses and individual responsibility. Politically it implied dictatorship, for it was necessary to keep in check the enemy who was not dead; and this would have to last for some time, for the 'jump into Socialism,' of which Engels spoke and which some Socialists were inclined to take too literally, would take long years, 'ten, or more.'

It was natural that revolutionaries did not like the new watchwords of patience, discipline, etc. But the workmen understood them. The revolutionary who says in a supercilious way, 'I am not one of those who sing the praise of organic, constructional work, practicality and work by degrees,' reveals his social roots. He represents the mentality of the *petit bourgeois*, 'of the small owner who has been maddened by the horrors of war, by sudden ruin, by unheard-of sufferings of hunger and chaos, who hysterically runs hither and thither, looking for an issue and a salvation, passing from confidence in the proletariat to accesses of despair. What separates the workmen from

even the extreme revolutionary elements of the *petite bourgeoisie* is his watchword of self-control and organization.' We must learn from the Capitalists that which our revolutionary past did not permit us to learn for ourselves. Before we can organize Socialist construction, we must know the laws of large-scale industry in general. As for the other type of Revolutionary, 'we must clearly realize and firmly remember that on that sort of social foundation no Socialism can be built. Only a class which goes unhesitatingly along its road, does not lose heart or despair on the hardest, most difficult, and most dangerous marches, can be the leader of the working and exploited masses. We have no use for hysterical impulses. We want the measured step of the iron battalions of the Proletariat.'

But it was not till much later that all these precepts became once more the order of the day. The work of administration was not yet destined to supersede the work of suppression and fighting. The Civil War broke out on 26th May, when, with the Allies' approval, the Czechoslovak units that were on their way to be embarked at Vladivostok and were posted all along the Trans-Siberian from Penza to Irkutsk, mutinied, made themselves masters of the railway, deposed the local Soviets and set up S.-R. governments instead.

CHAPTER X

THE CIVIL WAR AND
THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL

(May 1918–November 1920)

THE issue in the Civil War was whether the Communist Party, with the working class behind it, was to retain the power and thus (incidentally) to preserve the country from subjection to foreign Imperialism; or whether the White Armies were to restore the bourgeoisie to power as the agent of Allied Capitalism. The war passed through two main phases, the turning-point being November 1918, the month of the Allied victory over Germany. Throughout the first period the issues were obscured by the presence of Germany—who also made attempts to become the master of the Russian bourgeoisie—and by the activity of the *petit bourgeois* parties, in particular of the S.-R.s. These latter played a leading part in the commencement of the Civil War, and without their aid it would never have begun. For the open reactionaries who, with Allied help, were

placed in power after the Armistice would never have been able to attract the farmers. The farmers—that is to say, those upper and middle strata of the peasantry who produced a surplus of grain for the market—were the pivot of the Civil War: they made possible the first successes of the counter-revolutionary agents of the Allies, the S.-R.s and the Czechoslovaks, and it was largely owing to the organic inability of the open reactionaries to win the farmers over to their side that the ‘White cause’ came to so inglorious an end. As for the S.-R.s, they were able to attract the farmers by their slogans, but they were quite incapable of learning the art of governing. They were thus early shoved aside in the death struggle between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the dictatorship of Capital.

The concrete economic expression of the Civil War inside the country was the ‘war for grain,’ which began by conditioning the mutual relations of the proletariat and the farmers. The regular supply of bread for the urban population was already disorganized by the war, and still more by the Kerensky régime; in May 1918, when the menace of hunger became a reality before the workmen of Petrograd, a deputation of the great Putilov steel works—one of the shock units of the Revolution—came to Lenin, and it was in answer to them that he defined the immediate problem of the

Soviet Government and of the working class as the organization of 'a great crusade against grain profiteers.' It implied 'the absolute prohibition of all private corn trade, the obligatory surrender of all surplus grain to the State at a fixed price, the absolute prohibition of the hiding and secreting of surplus grain by anybody; and the strictest registration of all surplus grain for the just distribution of bread between all citizens, controlled by the Proletarian State.'¹

This policy continued in force till the end of the Civil War, and without it the Soviet Government could never have carried through. But it was also the principal internal cause of the outbreak of the Civil War, for it inclined the farmers of the Volga and of Siberia to support the S.-R.s when these latter rose against the Soviets under cover of Czechoslovak bayonets.

The Left S.-R.s, who, after the Peace of Brest, had formed a 'parliamentary' and 'legal' opposition inside the Soviets and continued to remain loyal to the Soviet cause against its bourgeois enemies, now also became the mouthpiece of the discontented farmers. At the Fifth Congress of Soviets (4th-10th June), their leader, Marie Spiridonova, in a violent and hysterical speech denounced the Bolsheviks as the tyrants of the peasants and the agents of

¹ *Works*, xv., p. 301 foll.

German Imperialism who were selling Russia to the Germans. Lenin answered her, ridiculing the charge of pro-Germanism, and firmly insisting on an uncompromising grain policy, which was endorsed by the Congress. But its sittings had not finished when the Left S.-R.s rose in arms in Moscow; one of them, at the same time, murdered the German Ambassador, Count Mirbach; another, Colonel Muraviev, Commander-in-Chief against the Czechoslovaks, attempted to march against Moscow, but, abandoned by his soldiers, committed suicide.

The Peace of Brest and the presence of a German Ambassador in Moscow gave a specious pretext to representing the Communists as the agents of German Imperialism. To-day it seems extraordinary that people could have been silly enough to believe the fable. But the conditions of Revolution, War, and Civil War in which Russia was living were easily productive of acute forms of 'war hysteria,' and there were many people even among sincere revolutionaries who were unable to understand the workings of Lenin's mind and of the minds of his collaborators. Among the Left S.-R.s in particular, the belief in a secret understanding between Lenin and Ludendorff seems to have been sincere—the effect of the hysterical state of the *petit bourgeois*, maddened to despair by the ordeal of war

and revolution. As for the bourgeois, whether Russian or foreign, their complete and innate inability to understand the Communist mind may also have led some of them actually to believe in the myth.

The facts, however, were very different. German Imperialism was only a shade less hostile to Communism than the Allies were. If the Allies organized the Czechoslovak mutiny and landed troops at Archangel, the Germans supported the counter-Revolutionary Government of the Don Cossacks and encouraged anti-Bolshevik formations in the territory occupied by them, whence 'Russian' armies invaded the Soviet territory. In fact, there established itself a sort of united front of Germany and the Allies against the Soviets—the pro-German Don Cossacks worked in close contact with the pro-Ally 'Volunteer Army.'

By murdering Mirbach, the Left S.-R.s hoped to force a rupture with Germany, and to attract to their side all that section of the Communist Party and of the working class that had been, in February, susceptible to the propaganda of 'Left Communism.' In the latter hope they failed utterly. In the former they nearly succeeded, and would have quite succeeded if Germany had not already been approaching a crisis. Lenin, on hearing of the assassination of Mirbach, went to the Embassy on an official visit of apology; he was ready

to go to great lengths in accepting what terms the Germans might impose, but he knew where he would draw the line. When the Germans demanded the introduction of a German battalion into Moscow to guard the Embassy, his refusal was immediate and unhesitating.

The Germans withdrew the demand and moved their Embassy to Pskov, in the occupied zone. Ludendorff began to prepare for a new offensive against Russia, which was only prevented from materializing by developments in the Western Front. But even before the decisive turn in the situation in France, Lenin, anticipating the event, began to adopt an increasingly firm tone with the Germans. Only a fortnight after the assassination of Mirbach, the Sovnarkom decided to proceed one step farther towards Socialism, and to pass from workmen's control to the nationalization of industrial enterprises; the Germans were notified that this would imply no exemption for their nationals. They protested against the measure, but, in spite of their protest, it became law on 28th June.

The work of the Right S.-R.s was much more sinister than that of their Left namesakes. Besides serving as a stepping-stone for foreign intervention and bourgeois counter-revolution, they started a campaign of individual terror against the Communist leaders. It culminated at the end of the summer when, on the same day

of 30th August, one of them killed the Chief of the Petrograd Cheka, Uritsky, while another gravely wounded Lenin in Moscow. It was this succession of acts that led to the strengthening of the Cheka and its gradual transformation into one of the most effective defensive institutions ever created by revolutionaries.

The attempt on Lenin was made by a woman, Fanny Kaplan ; she fired at him at the moment when he was stepping into his motor-car on leaving a workmen's meeting on the south side of Moscow. One bullet stuck in the lungs, the other traversed the neck, grazing the vertebrae. Wounded, Lenin showed the greatest courage ; he refused to be carried up the staircase of his home, insisting on walking. Several days passed before he was out of danger. Ultimately his iron constitution triumphed over the wounds, but they were not without a grave effect upon his fatal illness. Faced with the danger of losing their leader, the Communists, the workmen and all the people who had made the Soviet cause their own, were stung into a fury of exasperation against the counter-revolutionaries, and flooded by a wave of affection for the leader. The 30th August was an important stage in the formation of that unique attitude of which Lenin has become the object.

The collapse of Germany changed the whole situation. The end of the War brought to

light the latent revolutionary forces in the West, and showed the Socialist Republic how many allies it had in all countries. At home the military situation remained very grave, for the immediate effect of the Allied victory was a great strengthening of the White armies. In fact, from the purely strategic point of view, the situation was never so critical as in the summer and early autumn of 1919. But the political situation was immensely simplified and cleared up. The anti-Soviet armies had abandoned all pretence of democracy, and were, obviously and unquestionably, working for reaction pure and simple. It was equally clear that their victory would signify the victory of foreign Capitalism and the end of Russian independence. All this brought the peasants, and even the democratic intelligentsia, over to the Soviets. The adhesion of the peasants played as large a part in their victory as the efficiency of the Red Army. In Siberia, in particular, the victory over counter-revolution was almost entirely due to the spontaneous and unsupported action of the local peasant armies.

During these years of Civil War, two men personified between them the Communist cause—Lenin and Trotsky. To-day, when Lenin has become the hero and beacon of the revolutionaries of all the world, while Trotsky has fallen into political nonentity, one is rather inclined

to forget and belittle the part played by him during the critical years that saved the Soviet Republic. But the case of Trotsky may be compared to that of Plekhanov: the fact that Plekhanov, after twelve years of weakness and vacillation, signed his political death warrant by becoming, in 1914, the supporter of Allied Imperialism, must not obscure the ultimately more important fact that he laid the first foundations of Russian Marxism and of the Party of the Russian Proletariat. So, the fact that Trotsky completed his political suicide by publishing anti-Soviet articles in the *Daily Express*, should not make one forget his work in 1917-19. He was one of those revolutionary intellectuals whose value rises and falls with the revolutionary wave. In 1917, and again during the Civil War, he was stirred into splendid and spectacular energy by the spectacular tremendousness of his task; in the years that followed 1921, he collapsed into ineffective *petit bourgeois* phraseology. At serious junctures, as the White offensive against Petrograd, Trotsky's eloquence could whip the people into a frenzy of heroism. He gave the romantic and rhetorical touch to the generally unromantic and unrhetorical Russian Revolution. This attracted the intelligentsia and other individualistic elements of the intermediate classes, while the professional soldiers were treated by him with a mixture of intima-

tion and encouragement which made them respect him as a real leader. But his success among the military brought out in Trotsky those anti-democratic and 'authoritarian' tendencies which are a danger always inherent in an organized and militant revolutionary movement. The dictatorship of the proletariat, a dictatorship that is, at the same time, a democracy, tended in his hands to degenerate into a dictatorship pure and simple. The organization of the Red Army came to be conceived as the model for the organization of the proletarian State ; the workmen, as the members of a ruling military caste, pledged to strict hierarchic discipline ; and the peasants, as a subject race, to be treated exclusively from the point of view of their function as grain producers for the ruling military order. These tendencies remained, of course, unexpressed and even largely subconscious, but such was the direction in which Trotsky and his admirers were imperceptibly deflecting the course of the Revolution.

For the outer world Lenin did not take human shape till later. In the imagination of the Russian and foreign bourgeoisie, he still remained the wild demagogue of April-July 1917, the usurper of October, the wicked assassin of the Constituent Assembly, the traitor of the Peace of Brest. But among the workmen and peasants his name, by the end of the Civil War, had almost assumed its present

proportions. For the workmen he had finally become their unquestioned chief and leader, the cause of Socialism having become inseparable from his person. The peasants came by degrees to regard him as a powerful friend and protector, not only against the detested counter-revolutionaries and interventionists who were bringing back the squire and the policeman, but also against the abuses and exaggerations of Communist administration. Lenin's peasant policy was very clear and uncompromising in so far as the prohibition of private trade in grain was concerned. Again and again he rubbed it into the minds of the peasants and of all the intermediate classes that this was the one guarantee of victory over the Whites, and that 'free trade in corn' was the cry of Capitalist and Tsarist restoration. It was only after the Civil War, when the policy had done its work and borne victory, that he gave in on this point.

While he remained adamant in this essential matter, he did everything to alleviate the position of the farmers and to make them feel that they were the partners in power and not the subjects of the workmen. During the first months after the October Revolution the Communist policy had been to stimulate class differentiation inside the villages, one of the principal means for this being the institution of special Committees of Poorer Peasants (*kombedy*). These played no

small part in alienating the more substantial farmers from Soviet rule. On Lenin's initiative they were discontinued at the end of 1918. At the Eighth Party Congress (March 1919) the policy of winning over the 'middle peasant' (*serednyak*, that is to say, the main mass of peasants who neither employed hired labour nor worked for wages) was definitely announced by Lenin. It was impossible to win him over by force. It was necessary to understand his ways and win his confidence. Dictatorial methods in agriculture were inadmissible. 'We are in favour of communal farms, but they must be run in such a manner as to win the peasants' confidence. And up to that time we are not their teachers but their pupils. Nothing can be sillier than the mere thought of forcing the average peasant to change his economic relations. Our task is not to expropriate the average peasant, but to take account of the special conditions of their lives, to learn from themselves the methods that may lead them to a better social order and least of all to order them about.'¹ It was this policy that made Lenin's name as popular among the peasants as it was among the workmen.

By the side of the peasants Lenin extended his encouragement to the democratic intelligentsia, and gave a friendly welcome to the S.-R.s and Mensheviks, who from the end of 1918 onwards

¹ *Works*, xvi., p. 151.

realized by degrees where Democracy lay, and rallied to the Soviet cause. He encouraged their employment in the Government service, pointing out that, after all, they were good democrats and a thousand times preferable to the Tsarist and bourgeois officials who had gone over to the Soviets merely because the Soviets were in power.

But what gave Lenin a unique and entirely personal popularity was the way in which he saw and spoke to thousands—workmen, peasants, administrative and party workers from every end of the country. At the numerous congresses he mixed with the peasant delegates, often unrecognized by them, listening to their talk, and taking stock of their grievances. He received hundreds of provincial administrative workers, listening to their reports, often knowing beforehand what they would say but waiting for a new confirmation of what he knew. While Trotsky moved from one end of the country to the other in his spectacular propaganda train, Lenin never left Moscow and yet remained in closer touch with all the moods and feelings of the country. From his central position he saw the country to its remotest corners and was, alone, better informed than the whole administrative apparatus put together. His attitude to that apparatus was characteristic. He insisted in general on strict discipline and allowed of no compromise in the application of essential and

fundamental measures, but he knew at the same time that the work of government was—of necessity—being conducted in an inexperienced, inefficient way and that it would not do to erect into absolute rules measures that were nothing better than gropings after a not easily to be reached solution. He encouraged disobedience if it sprang from sincere and intelligent initiative. When Party workers in responsible posts in the Provinces found the measures prescribed from Moscow absurd, he would advise them simply to ignore them. When a decree was passed discontinuing City Soviets, he remarked to a provincial administrative worker who criticized it, that it was a good way of testing their fitness : a City Soviet that was really any good would never permit itself to be dissolved.¹ Against bureaucracy, procrastination, and formalism he waged a relentless war. Unable to make an end of them, he intervened personally whenever he could and, by telephoning himself to half a dozen offices, would finish in a quarter of an hour an affair which in the normal course of officialdom would have taken days or weeks to settle. But this, of course, could only palliate the evil, which could be unrooted only by a lengthy re-education of all concerned.

Lenin went a long way towards accomplishing this purely pedagogic task. He made every effort to inculcate in all those who were within

¹ Antonov-Saratovsky in *O Lenin*, iii., pp. 112-20.

his immediate reach efficient administrative methods, insisting especially on the duty of every administrative worker to verify in actual fact whether the measures he took were really carried out, and on the supreme value of time.¹

What is, however, perhaps his greatest legacy to the administrative methods of the Communist Party was the practice, introduced by him almost immediately after the Revolution, of 'self-criticism.' The frank and outspoken recognition of mistakes and shortcomings, publicly made at congresses or in the Press, exposed to the outer world many diseases of the Party and of its governing apparatus. It seemed at first a confession of weakness. It was in reality a symptom of confident force, and a guarantee that all diseases would be cured. Owing to Lenin, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has always lived in an atmosphere of intense critical light, that penetrates into every corner and is a powerful antidote to slackness, incompetence and self-satisfaction.

All this, springing out of an immense intellect and an unlimited working capacity, accustomed the masses to think of Lenin as a force outside and above the Communist Party. But such a view would be entirely wrong. In the great

¹ On Lenin as an administrative pedagogue, see especially the recollections of his secretary, L. Fotieva, in *O Lenin*, iv., pp. 188-201.

work of fortifying the Soviet Government throughout the years of Civil War, Lenin acted and could act only as the team-leader of the Communist Party. Without the army of experienced, tempered, and trusty party workers he had behind him, his personal effort would have been in vain. He had by his side a phalanx of splendid men, entirely devoid of personal ambition, with an unlimited sense of duty and a working capacity equal to his own, who ever were and remained the backbone of the Party. If one man is to be mentioned from their number it must be Sverdlov, the President of the Central Executive Committee, who died in March 1919, and who, as Lenin said in his obituary, 'expressed more completely and entirely than any other man the very essence of our proletarian Revolution.'¹

In the work of interior administration and of the organization of the party, there was no problem that did not claim Lenin's attention. The League of Communist Youth, the movement for the real equality of women, school problems and problems of adult education—all bear on them the impress of his mind and work. But his main interest was concentrated on that work which actually pointed towards Socialism by developing the spontaneous discipline of the working classes. His greatest

¹ *Works*, xvi., p. 87.

satisfaction in the whole course of the Revolution came probably in May 1919, when the workmen of the Moscow and Kazan Railway initiated the institution of Communist Saturdays, pledging themselves to work without wages for five hours on Saturdays to help the front. The pamphlet he wrote on that occasion (*The Great Initiative*) occupies a central position in his writings. He speaks in it of the exceptional place held by the industrial proletariat in Capitalist society. Alone of all the exploited classes, it has been placed in material conditions that have developed in it a capacity for organization, and thus made it capable of taking over capitalistic production and transforming it into Socialism.

‘The Dictatorship of the proletariat . . . is not only, not even primarily, the coercion of the exploiters. The economic basis of this revolutionary coercion, the guarantee of its vitality and success, is the fact that the proletariat represents and realizes a higher type of the social organization of labour than can be attained under Capitalism. This is essential. This is the source of strength and the security for the inevitable complete victory of Communism. . . . The Capitalist organization of labour was based on the discipline of hunger. . . . The Communist organization of labour, the first step towards which is Socialism, is based, and will be increasingly based, on the

free and conscious discipline of the workers themselves. . . .'¹

Proletarian organization was infinitely superior to that imposed by the Capitalists, but before the Socialist Republic could attain to Socialism it would have to become capable of 'equalling and surpassing' the Capitalist countries in industrial production. The Civil War was destroying and degrading Russian industry, but Lenin never lost sight of the work of reconstruction that would have to begin as soon as the war was won. In the worst years of the destruction he evolved the idea of electrification, which became to him the symbol of reconstruction and a beacon of hope. Under his immediate direction a plan for electrification was elaborated in 1920, and no sooner had the Civil War ended than the construction of a great power station on the Volkhov was begun. This was the first-born of Russian Socialist industry.

Electrification—which was to carry light into the darkest recesses of the countryside—was closely associated, in Lenin's mind, with the titanic work lying before the Communist Party of raising the cultural level of the Russian people, which had become the pioneer of Socialism, to at least the level of the Capitalist nations of Europe. In spite of the hard war-time conditions, much was done in this direction even before the end of the Civil War. But

¹ *Works*, xvi., pp. 247-48.

Lenin never ceased reminding the Party and the people of the enormous extent of the educational work before them, and of the tremendous efforts that were necessary to transform a nation of peasants hardly able to read and write into citizens worthy of the task before them.

But problems of internal organization were only part of Lenin's work. The foreign policy of the Soviet Government was directed by him. He conducted it in the same spirit in which he had signed the Peace of Brest and nationalized industrial enterprises against the protest of Germany. There was no compromise he would refuse to consider, subject to two conditions : that it was really necessary ; and that it did not affect the fundamental political principles of the Soviet polity or jeopardize the survival of the Socialist Republic. In this connection his attitude to the proposal made by the Allies (chiefly by the United States) early in 1919 is characteristic. The Allied proposal was that a general peace should be concluded in Russia on the basis of *uti possidetis*—the Soviets and the Whites retaining respectively that territory which they occupied at the moment. No intervention in the other's territory would be permitted, but the local population was recognized to have the right of changing its government if it wished. This last clause decided Lenin's acceptance of the scheme, for he was confident that, if the White territories were

left to themselves, the people would before long oust the Whites and turn Red. (This was what actually happened in the Far Eastern Republic, the only part of Russia where, under pressure from Japan, this policy was later on applied.) A conference was to be summoned at Prinkipo, where the Whites and the Soviets would come to terms, the Allies acting as mediators. It did not come off because the Whites, whose forecast was similar to Lenin's, refused to come.

Ever since November 1918 the international situation was materially modified by the birth of an International Revolutionary movement, which at once became a principal concern for Lenin. It is important to be quite clear about Lenin's respective attitudes to the Russian Revolution and to the Communist Revolution abroad. Attempts have been made to minimize his internationalism and to make of him a revolutionary patriot. This is entirely false. We have already seen his readiness to sacrifice the Russian Socialist Republic to the success of the more important cause of Socialism in Germany, if only the German Revolution became as much a reality as the Russian was. His attitude in this question was that of a soldier.

There were only two sides in the struggle—international Capitalism, and the international Proletariat. The proletariat of one nation was

only a unit of the international army, and its leaders were as well entitled to sacrifice it, if this was necessary for the common victory, as a general is entitled to sacrifice his division to save the army. The question in each case was only whether such a sacrifice would really contribute to the victory of the common cause or be only an ineffective gesture. History turned out in such a way that Lenin was never faced with the problem of sacrificing the Russian Socialist Republic to any other. Neither did he profess or encourage any national pride in the achievements of Russian Socialists. He recognized them as such, explained them historically, advised foreign revolutionaries to study carefully the Russian revolutionary experience and to learn from it, but never claimed any inherent superiority of the Russian workmen over the others.

The book that he specially devoted to the analysis of the Russian experience and its success (*The Infantile Disorder of 'Left-wing' Communism*) begins by saying that it would be a mistake to deduce from the general applicability of Russian methods that Russia will always remain the model of Communist achievement. 'After the victory of the Proletarian Revolution, be it only in one of the more advanced countries, there will most probably come a sharp change ; and before long Russia will cease to be a model country, and will become—

by Soviet and Socialist standards—a backward country once more.’¹

The task which Lenin had set himself immediately after the outbreak of the War, of reconstructing the International on a purely revolutionary basis, now came into the sphere of practical politics. In March 1919 a Congress of revolutionary and international Socialists met secretly in Moscow and founded the Third Communist International. It adopted the ideas of Lenin, and of the Zimmerwald Left, the main points being the emphasis on the revolutionary nature of Socialism, a complete segregation from the opportunist Socialists, the recognition of the right of non-European nations to independence, and the recognition of Soviet Democracy as superior to Parliamentary Democracy. In his relations with the foreign Communist parties, as in his relations with the masses in Russia, Lenin came into closest personal contact with the delegates, and his personal magnetism played a large part in the building of the new organization.

The problems connected with the International were many and difficult, the principal one being to convince all the national parties of the importance of the Russian experience and the necessity of learning from it, without losing the spontaneous initiative so necessary in revolutionary work. The new International had

¹ *Works*, xvii., p. 115.

to be taught to avoid pitfalls of two kinds. On the one hand, it was necessary to draw a sharp line between Communism and the opportunist, semi-Reformist Socialism of such groups as the Independent Social-Democrats (Kautsky) in Germany and the I.L.P. in England. The German and the Hungarian revolutions failed very largely because of the inability of the Communists to keep aloof from these dangerous neighbours. But, on the other hand, it was equally important to combat 'revolutionary phrases' and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies.

There was a strong tendency, for instance, in all the young Communist parties to reject participation in bourgeois parliaments and in non-Communist trade unions, in order to preserve their revolutionary integrity. In *The Infantile Disorder*, Lenin explained how necessary it was to distinguish between two kinds of compromises: those that did and those that did not affect fundamental principles. The latter, when necessary, were obligatory; only the former were ruled out. It was equally important to remember that the Party was the vanguard of the working class, and that a necessary consequence of this fact was that the class, as a whole, was bound to lag behind the Party. It was childish to expect from all the workmen a clear understanding of the political principles of Communism, and there was no other way of bringing the bulk of the class to Communism except by

penetrating into non-party organizations, such as trade unions.

The Communist International did not at once succeed in attracting into its organization the bulk of the working class of Europe and America. But the influence of Lenin and of Socialist Russia on the Western proletariat overstepped by far the frames of the Communist International. The workmen of Europe were, without distinction of party allegiance—and often in direct opposition to their leaders—instinctively and naturally on the side of the world's first Proletarian Republic, and their unanimous demand of 'hands off Russia' played a decisive part in the abandonment by the Allies—especially by England—of the policy of intervention.

The problems of the International were closely related to the problem of nationalities at home. The Soviet policy adopted in this matter was entirely evolved by Lenin and was the logical outcome of his attitude to the problem of nationalities during the War. It was based on the recognition of the right of self-determination to all nationalities. Many Communists regarded this as an entirely non-Marxian heresy, insisting that such a right could only belong to the working classes of every nationality. But Lenin saw that this might lead to the recognition of the right of the proletariat of one nationality to oppress the

bourgeoisie of another, which would be only a grotesquely inverted form of Imperialism.

The class struggle must be carried on inside each nationality. The workmen of a formerly Imperialist nation could only intervene as the allies of the working masses of the formerly oppressed nationality, but never as foreign conquerors—which would make of them the successors of the Imperialist classes they had overthrown at home. The policy of denying the right of self-determination to nationalities as such was in many Russian (and Jewish) Communists the natural and unconscious survival of Imperial Chauvinism. In many Communists belonging to minor nationalities, it was a reaction against bourgeois nationalism, and the seemingly logical outcome of consistent internationalism. Lenin's policy achieved two aims: it combated the revival of Russian Imperialism disguised as Soviet centralism, and it took the ground away from under the bourgeois nationalists of the national minorities.

The result was the gradual adhesion of all the democratic and non-political intelligentsia of the national minorities to the Soviet cause. In Bashkiria, Ukraine, Georgia, Central Asia (where Communism had for a moment assumed particularly Imperialistic hues) Lenin's policy disarmed local nationalism and turned it to the profit of the Soviets; for it was the only policy that could satisfy at once all nationalisms. It

culminated, already at the time of his fatal illness, in the formation of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (December 1922), which put a formal end to all velleities of restoring Russian Imperial Chauvinism on a Soviet basis.

By March 1920 the Civil War seemed at an end. Kolchak and Denikin were defeated and England was withdrawing from intervention. It looked as if a new breathing space had come and constructive work could begin. But this was not yet to be. As soon as England withdrew from the game, her ally, France, stepped in, helped Wrangel to organize the remainder of Denikin's army in the Crimea and instigated Poland, which was in an indeterminate state of war with Soviet Russia, to more active energy. In the end of May, Pilsudski started his offensive against Ukraine and took Kiev, thus beginning the most famous of the Soviet campaigns.

The Polish war of 1920 was dominated, on the Soviet side, by a fundamental contradiction. Pilsudski's aggression produced a great wave of nationalism, which infected the soldiers and even large sections of the Communist Party. The Red Army conducted itself as a conquering Russian army, and contributed to produce in the Polish peasants, and even to some extent in the Polish workmen, a great counter-wave of patriotism. This helped the Polish oligarchs to make the war a national war and prevented any internationalist upheaval of the working

classes—which alone could have given victory to the Soviets.

At the same time, for Lenin and for all real Communists, the war was not a national war against Poland for the liberation of White Russia and Western Ukraine, but part of the great class war against the bourgeoisie of all nations. Its aim was to establish a contact with the German proletariat which would have immensely increased the chances of a European revolution. This being the aim, Lenin could play very great odds. The results of victory were incommensurable with the results of defeat, for Poland could do no more than occupy parts of White Russia and Ukraine, but was incapable of jeopardizing the existence of the Soviet Republic. Contrary to the advice of military men, Lenin insisted on the strategically indefensible march on Warsaw which ended in the catastrophe of August 1920. The campaign was lost, but had it been won its effects would have been incalculable.

After the defeat at Warsaw, Lenin was the first to realize that to continue the war could be justified only from a national but not from a Communist point of view. He at once began negotiations with the Poles which led to the Peace of Riga—very unsatisfactory for Russian national feeling—but which at least left the Republic without external enemies and free to turn all its forces against Wrangel, the last

remnant of the counter-Revolution. Wrangel was defeated and ejected from Russian territory in November 1920. The Civil War was over.

It was during the Civil War period that the "Red Terror" took the place of high treason and pro-Germanism as the factotum of anti-Bolshevik propaganda. While what bloodshed there was during the first months after the Revolution was entirely the outcome of spontaneous local action, in the second half of 1918 (we have seen under what provocation) Terror became a policy. In this the Russian Revolution went the way of its French archetype. A Revolutionary Government is inevitably for some time a government that has not yet mastered the complicated machine of administration. It is difficult for it to discriminate between the actual and the potential counter-revolutionary, and it is forced with tragic necessity to use methods whose effectiveness is not proportioned with their formal justice. Lenin did not recoil before methods that had been used by the Jacobins and the Communards. We have no reason to believe that he delighted in them any more than the good soldier does in court-martialing enemy spies. But whatever his private feelings about the matter, he would have been the last man to deny personal responsibility for his party's policy, or to give expression to sentiments that could not be translated into action.

the last of the great German philosophers as the beginner of the practical struggle for Socialism. He was as much akin to Hegel as to Lenin.

On the other hand there can be no doubt of the incomparable superiority of Marx to Lenin as an original philosopher. There is nothing in Lenin that might compare with Marx's titanic achievement of 'placing on its feet' the dialectical method of Hegel, and of creating the conception of Historical Materialism. As a philosopher, Lenin was no more than an admirably adequate disciple, who had mastered the master's teaching to the point of making it his intellectual life-blood; a disciple not only fully equipped to defend it from the distortions of vulgarizers and prospective renegades, but whose every act had its logical roots in that teaching. His was *naturaliter* a Marxist, that is to say, a dialectical mind. At a time when, in the hands of the Second International, Marxism was degenerating into a scholasticism spun out of the Labour theory of value, Lenin was almost alone to see that the vital principle of Marxism was the opposition of dialectical to metaphysical thinking, of the thinking that knows that truth is given a concrete meaning only by the constantly changing concrete situations of reality to the thinking that starts from immutable and abstract values. Only that man was a Marxist who knew to his finger-tips

that abstract principles were empty of meaning unless related to a historical context.

What has been given the name of Leninism is precisely the application of the relatively abstract formulas of Marx to the concrete context of a different age: it is 'the Marxism of the age of Imperialism and of Proletarian Revolution.'¹ It follows that Leninism itself is a relatively abstract formula in so far as 'the age of Imperialism and of Proletarian Revolution' is a relatively long period of time, falling into a succession of more concrete historical situations. The practical application of Leninism in the thirteenth year of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat must obviously be different from its application in the fourth year; and, for instance, to advocate in 1930 a policy on the ground that it was supported by Lenin in 1921 would be only to display a complete misunderstanding of the very essence of his ideas.

Leninism is related to Marxism as species to genus. But Leninism is not identical with the sum of Lenin's outlook. The Marxist precedes in him the creator of Leninism, and the vindication and re-establishment of genuine Marxism was one of his principal tasks in life. I have spoken in another chapter of Lenin's defence of materialism and of his fight against the insinuation of Idealist and quasi-Idealist philosophies into Socialist theory. Next to the dialectical method,

¹ Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (sixth edition), p. 74.

the philosophical problem that interested Lenin most, was the problem of the immanence of movement in matter. His interest in the classics of philosophy was conditioned by their relevance to these two problems. Apart from Hegel and the French materialists, he was particularly attracted to Heraclitus, whose philosophy is, as it were, the dialectical method at the mythological stage, and to Spinoza, whom he valued particularly highly for having destroyed the idea of a transcendent cause.

The insistence on dialectical, as opposed to mechanistic materialism, was part of Lenin's work of restoration of true revolutionary Marxism against the aberrations of the Second International. In the hands of the anti-revolutionary Socialists the determinism of Marx (a determinism inseparable from the scientific mind, which is by definition a mind operating in terms of cause and effect) had degenerated into a philistine fatalism, which found expression in the doctrine, for a long time implied rather than stated, of the ultimate inevitability of Socialism, apart from the efforts of Socialists. In practice this fatalism reflected the anti-revolutionary tendencies of the Socialists of the pre-war period and a complete abandonment of the idea of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. It is superfluous to insist on the fact that such fatalism is completely opposed to the real teaching of Marx.

But in his time Lenin was almost alone in insisting on the active nature of Marxism, whose greatest and most quintessential expression is the famous closing proposition of the *Thesen über Feuerbach*: 'Philosophers have done nothing more than explain the world, it is our business now to change it.' In all these points, as in the political conclusions drawn from them, Lenin did nothing but re-awaken the revolutionary soul of Marxism that had been lulled to sleep by the Second International, and his teaching is nothing more than Marxism as opposed to pseudo-Marxism.

As a political thinker, too, Lenin often did nothing but revive and re-assert conceptions specifically formulated by Marx, but forgotten, sterilized, or even deliberately concealed¹ by the writers of the Second International. Many of the ideas that hold a foremost place in the Communist doctrine, as established by Lenin, and are most violently attacked by the renegades of Socialism are not Lenin's, but Marx's and Engels'. This is true of the idea of Revolution as the only possible form of transition from Capitalism to Socialism; of the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only possible political form for the intermediate period between the political overthrow of the Capitalists and the establishment of the classless society

¹ In the course of editing of Marx's and Engels' posthumous papers.

of Socialism; of the Paris Commune as the prototype of such a proletarian State. Still less is Lenin anything else than an orthodox Marxist when he regards the State as nothing but the organization for the violent oppression of class by class. The bourgeois state of to-day—whether it calls itself a democracy or not—is the organization of the capitalist class to keep in obedience the proletariat. The proletarian state, foreshadowed by the Paris Commune, and realized by the October Revolution, is an organization for the suppression of the former possessing classes by the victorious proletariat.

The difference between the two is, firstly, that the former is the organized oppression of the working majority by the exploiting minority, while the latter is the organized suppression of the exploiting minority by the working majority; and secondly, that the former perpetuates class warfare, the exploiters being unable to carry on without the work of the workers, while the latter, by eliminating the exploiters as a class, achieves the goal of a classless society. Neither is Lenin responsible for the teaching of the gradual 'withering away' of the State which must begin under the dictatorship of the proletariat and becomes complete under Socialism.¹ He only reasserted this 'anarchistic' element of

¹ The *locus classicus* on the 'withering away' of the State is in Engels' *Anti-Dühring* (pp. 302-3 of the third edition). It is quoted in *Works*, xiv., 2, pp. 308-9.

the Marxian teaching against the vulgarizers and faint-hearts of the Second International, who one-sidedly insisted on the difference between Marxism and Anarchism, while casting a veil on their kinship. Lenin reminded them that the ultimate goal of Marxism and Anarchism was the same—the establishment of a society where there would be no classes, and consequently, the State being merely the expression of domination of class over class, no State, and where communal functions would be reduced to the management of economic processes.¹ The difference—all-important, of course—was merely that Marxism made a scientific study of the possible way of attaining the goal, while the Anarchists thought it possible to reach it by an emotional rejection of the bourgeois state. Altogether, Lenin's general philosophy of the Revolution and of the State is explicitly contained in that of Marx and Engels, and the work in which it is set forth, *The State and Revolution*, consists of little else than quotations from the two founders of Scientific Socialism.

Leninism in the strict sense of the term is distinct from Marxism, in the measure in which it introduces into that 'algebra of Revolution' the numerical values of the 'age of Imperialism and Proletarian Revolution.' It could conse-

¹ 'Government exercised over men is replaced by the administration of things and the organization of processes of production.' Engels, *loc. cit.*

quently arise only when Lenin became fully conscious of the specific nature of Imperialism as a new phase in the evolution of Capitalism and of the Proletarian Revolution as a task of the immediate future—that is to say not before the first months of the Great War. But the peculiar political conditions of Russia, which made the Russian proletariat the ‘hegemon’ of a bourgeois revolution at a time when the proletariat of the more advanced countries was only separated from the prospect of a Socialist Revolution by the absence of a ‘revolutionary situation,’ had made it possible for Lenin to evolve one of the most essential elements of his developed theory long before Leninism, as a whole, took form. This is his teaching of the Party as the vanguard of the working class, and of the relation of conscious revolutionary work to the spontaneous movements of the masses, which is contained in that masterpiece of revolutionary thinking, *What is to be done?* written in 1902.

The main contents of Leninism is, however, Lenin’s analysis of Imperialism and of the revolutionary prospects arising from it. The following paragraphs are an attempt to summarize this analysis.

His definition of it was that Imperialism is a form of Capitalism in which competition has largely been superseded by monopoly, and the industrial by the financial capitalist.

Politically the age of monopolistic capitalism corresponds to the decline of bourgeois democracy, which was the political expression of the age of competition. The State increasingly comes under the direct, if camouflaged, rule of finance capital. The 'dictatorship of the bourgeoisie,' of which Marx spoke as the alternative to the dictatorship of the proletariat, tends to become an undisguised reality. In the more backward countries, which want to overtake the premier Imperialist powers, it assumes the outspoken form of Fascism. In the older and richer powers, thanks to their monopolistic position in the world market, capital is able to satisfy the upper layers of the working class, making of them its 'labour lieutenants,' and thus to preserve a semblance of Democracy. The official Socialist parties become the most reliable supporters of Capitalism, and the Imperialist State, whether Fascist or 'Democratic,' acquires an appearance of force and stability undreamed of in the age of capitalist liberalism.

But beneath a comforting surface there lie contradictions and conflicts incapable of solution. In spite of 'labour lieutenants of Capital' and of a partial (and temporary) rise in the standard of life of the working class, the contradiction between Capital and Labour is not mitigated but accentuated. Monopoly and amalgamation having immensely strengthened

the strategic position of Capital, the old peaceful means of class struggle—trade unions and parliament—cease to be effective. Capital begins an advance against labour, by degrees taking away from it what it had been able to win during the age of capitalist expansion, and as a result of the war crisis. Its advance against labour is accompanied by new methods of management, which reduces the workman to a slave and swells the ranks of the unemployed.

A second contradiction is due to the law, formulated by Lenin, of the 'unequal development of Capitalism,' which makes the capitalist states constantly change places in the scale of force. The rising powers demand a 'place in the sun,' which they can only have at the expense of other capitalist powers, for the world has been divided without residue into spheres of influence and there is no no-man's land left on the planet. In a capitalist world where agreements can only reflect the relative force of the sides entering on them, this contradiction can, in the long run, only be solved by force of arms.

The third contradiction of Imperialism is the growth of new capitalist nations in the colonies and semi-colonies. The export of capital necessarily leads to their industrialization, with the inevitable consequence that a native bourgeoisie and a native proletariat are formed, a native intelligentsia variously attached to one of these two classes comes into being, and political con-

sciousness begins to spread even to the main masses of small producers. The colonies and semi-colonies become revolutionary.

Imperialism is the last stage of Capitalism, immediately preceding the age of Socialism. The transition to Socialism is facilitated, on the one hand, by the concentration of capital in immense concerns. Revolution is made inevitable by the inescapable contradictions of Imperialist society. Imperialism has made the conflict between exploiters and exploited international, and the coming Revolution, though it may (and probably will) take the concrete form of a succession of national revolutions, will be in reality international. The world is divided into two camps. The two opponents, the only two independent and primary forces capable, in one way or another, of dominating the world are the Imperialist bourgeoisie and the Revolutionary proletariat. Between them are placed the numerous intermediary classes—such as the small producers of the Imperialist and semi-Imperialist countries ; the bourgeoisie of the colonies and semi-colonies ; and the non-proletarian working masses. The actual distribution of the secondary forces between the two combatants is a constantly varying factor, necessitating constant adaptations of strategy on the part of the leaders of the proletarian camp.

Of the two camps the Imperialist is infinitely

stronger in actual means, economic, military, and political. It has, at a relatively low price, the support of its 'labour lieutenants,' who serve their masters by side-tracking the rank and file of the proletariat with theories of anti-revolutionary 'Socialism' and 'industrial peace.' It has power and money, and infinitely greater experience and training. But it lacks one thing—the possibility of union, for as long as the capitalist world exists, and especially since it has entered on its present stage, it cannot emerge from a state of permanent warfare, which may remain latent for decades only to end by bursting out with increased force.

The proletarian camp is much weaker. Great masses of its partisans, especially in the colonies and semi-colonies, have not attained to any level of political consciousness and are leaderless and inexperienced. The proletariat of the imperialist countries is partly allured by the prospect of getting a bonus out of the super-profits of its rulers if it will keep obedient, partly drugged by the propaganda of the 'labour lieutenants of Capital.' But it is capable of unity; it possesses in the scientific Socialism of Marx and Engels an incomparable weapon, of which its enemy can make no use; above all, ever since the October Revolution, it has a leader and a vanguard in the first Proletarian State—the Soviet Union.

The basic problem of the relation of the Party to the masses and of the conscious strategy of the leaders to the spontaneous revolutionary movements of the masses was, as has been said, stated and, in substance, solved by Lenin as early as 1902. The subsequent development of his ideas, and of those of his successors, on this subject is entirely in the nature of a further substitution of a multiplicity of numerical values for those of *What is to be done?* Since 1917 the problems of leadership have become enormously complicated. Before the War Socialist leaders had only to organize the proletarian movement on a national scale. Now the Party of the Soviet Union is responsible for the actual construction of Socialism in an enormous—and backward—country, while the Executive Committee of the Communist International has to co-ordinate the work of revolutionaries in all the countries of the world. The main principles, however, remain the same—the duty of the leaders to lead and not to play the tail or ‘contemplate the posterior’ of the masses; the necessity for close and inseparable unity between leaders and masses, so that they should always ‘express what the masses feel’; the all-importance of preserving the purity of proletarian policy from *petit bourgeois* and opportunist tendencies, and the purity of Marxian theory from anti-revolutionary or non-scientific distortions; and the necessity of

- . putting to full use the revolutionary energies of all potential enemies of Imperialistic Capitalism.

This last necessity imposes on the revolutionary leaders the most complicated and responsible tasks, which will require of them the greatest dialectical responsiveness to a reality in constant flux. They will have to do with allies who will only be waiting for the moment to become enemies, and with enemies who are such only because they are ignorant of their own interests. They must be able to distinguish between such members of the exploiting class as are attracted to Communism because their own principal enemies are the Leviathans of Imperialism, and those masses who, though they may fall off and join the enemy, are by nature the supporters and, as it were, the wards of the proletariat. These latter include the innumerable masses of small producers throughout the world; and, first of all, the peasants. The duty of the Workers' Party to be the friend of the peasant was insisted on already by Engels, and in the course of the preceding chapters we have shown the rôle played by the peasants in the political strategy of Lenin.

The peasants are not a class in the real sense of the word and can never be a homogeneous social group. With individual differences according to the various countries, they fall into three main divisions. At one end the poor peasants, who depend wholly or partly on

hiring out their labour, belong to the semi-proletarian masses, and are different from the proletariat not in their interests, but only in their much lesser capacity for organization and political independence. At the other end are the farmers, who are real, if miniature, capitalists, and will ultimately gravitate to the camp of Capital. In between, unequally important in different countries, are the 'middle peasants,' who unite the greatest number of specific features, distinguishing them both from the bourgeoisie and from the proletariat.

The peasant has two faces—he is both a proprietor and a worker. As he is unable to compete with the Leviathans of big production, his interests are opposed to those of the capitalists and he may easily join in the Revolution. At a time of crisis when the capitalists have gone, but the proletariat has not yet asserted its dictatorship, the peasant, by making use of his monopoly of food production, may become an active enemy of the working class. But by nature he is incapable of political and economic independence, and must choose between the dictatorship of capital and the dictatorship of labour. His instincts, as they have been developed by bourgeois society, will be in favour of individual production and a free market, which is tantamount—though not in his understanding—to the dictatorship of capital. But the dictatorship of the proletariat, once achieved,

may create conditions in which the peasantry—except for a minority of definitely incipient capitalists in its upper layer—may be re-educated so as to lose its individualistic mentality and become amenable to Socialism. The very existence of the proletarian state creates an atmosphere where peasant co-operation—which in a capitalist society only serves to strengthen the individual producer's position in the market—may become a direct school of collectivism, a stepping-stone towards Socialism.

The central problems of Leninism are, however, those arising out of the strategical conduct of actual Revolution and the concrete problems of how to organize the dictatorship of the victorious proletariat. The best answers to these problems will be found in Lenin's own political practice in 1917 and the following years, and his writings of the same years, which make it 'transparent' to the understanding. In some of his later works—especially in *The Proletarian Revolution and Kautsky the Renegade* and *The Infantile Disorder of 'Left-wing' Communism*—he stated the problems in a more generalized form, that would not be 'too Russian' for the use of the foreign communists.

Armed insurrection is the only means¹ of

¹ This general statement may need modification after Revolution has transformed the chief Imperialist states into Socialist Republics. Then, but not before then, secondary nations may become Proletarian Republics without violence.

overthrowing the dictatorship of capital and its 'executive committee,' the bourgeois State, and of giving the power to the Proletariat. Armed insurrection must not be toyed with; in order to succeed it must be preceded by a 'revolutionary situation.' To attempt it when the situation is not revolutionary is light-minded and irresponsible adventurousness. Two conditions are necessary to produce a revolutionary situation: the presence of a revolutionary spirit in the working masses, and the inability of the governing classes to solve the problems history confronts them with. The political bankruptcy of the ruling bourgeoisie is thus a necessary pre-requisite for setting a Revolution going. Such a state of things is most likely to occur in connection with one of the fundamental and unavoidable contradictions of Imperialist society—unemployment, war, or revolution in the colonies. But once begun in any one country, a revolution may prove the detonator for world-wide Revolution, which may even spread to countries where the governing class has not reached the same stage of bankruptcy.

It is impossible to predict where Revolution will begin. As a general proposition this is most likely to happen not where the proletariat is strongest but where capitalism is weakest. The first Proletarian revolution took place in Russia, where an effete and brutal absolutism

was united with a native bourgeoisie devoid of achievements and of political prestige in a common vassalage to foreign finance. Similar conditions are most likely to be repeated in colonial and semi-colonial countries, or in Germany. In both cases the real master is foreign capital (in Germany, thanks to Versailles and the Young Plan), so that the cause of Revolution may rally to its side considerable sections of the national bourgeoisie and of the small producer; on the other hand, if it becomes the unconcealed underling of foreigners, the native bourgeoisie inevitably forfeits its political prestige. But the concrete forms of the political bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie are impossible to foresee.

Once victorious, the Revolution must be able to assert itself and defend itself. Even in Russia, with its politically effete upper classes, the forces of counter-revolution were sufficient to provoke a civil war of two and a half years. In the older capitalist countries, where there is a prosperous labour aristocracy, and where the intermediate classes are much more dominated by the prestige of the rich, the resistance of the old social order is likely to be much fiercer. The leaders of the victorious Revolution must consequently be able to combine the most effective dictatorial methods, in so far as the exploiting class is concerned, with the widest democratic appeal to all its natural supporters.

The old apparatus of government must be mercilessly smashed and swept away and a new one set up in its place, adapted to the opposite purpose of suppressing the former exploiters. For the Revolutionary Dictatorship to be effective, it must be absolutely united in mind and exercised by the Party of the Workers. The experience of Germany and Hungary is an eloquent warning against agreements with insufficiently revolutionary elements. But while the revolutionary dictators must fight shy of all contact with non- or semi-revolutionary *politicians*, they must at the same time be able to win the maximum support of the non- and semi-proletarian *masses*.

Democracy, in the State of the Revolutionary Workers, will—as far as one can see in the surveyable future—necessarily take the form of a Soviet Democracy, ‘which is not only the highest known form of democratic institutions, but the only form that can guarantee transition to Socialism in the most painless way.’¹

As the ‘proletariat stands in need of the State only in so far as it has to suppress its enemies,’² the State will remain a democratic dictatorship until, with the gradual and effective disappearance of classes—first of the class of exploiters, afterwards of that of the small producers—State organization becomes altogether unneces-

¹ *Works*, xv., p. 501.

² Engels, letter to Bebel (March 1875).

sary and, with the growth of Socialism, finally 'withers away.'

It may seem strange that so great a personality as Lenin should have been the leader of a class whose main characteristic is the subordination of the individual to the collective, and whose philosophy substitutes the impersonal processes of economic history for the action of individual heroes. That the proletarian Revolution should be epitomized in a single man in a way no bourgeois Revolution ever was, seems a paradox as glaring as the paradox of backward Russia becoming the leader of the world Revolution.

But, to begin with, Lenin was not a 'great man' of the ordinary sort. His greatness was entirely free from individualism and self-assertion and stood in no contradiction to the collective spirit of Proletarian Socialism. It was selfless. Moreover, its very kind was of a distinctly Socialist nature, for it ultimately consisted in nothing else than that absolute 'transparency' of action to the agent's understanding, which will be the central characteristic of Socialist civilization.

Neither should it be supposed that Marxian Determinism and Economic Materialism deny the existence of great men. What Marxism does deny is only the view—implying a belief in free will—of great men as causally uncon-

ditioned, independent agents of history. Like everything else in history, great men are the products of social facts, one of the forms assumed by the fundamental process of class war. Great men are the embodiment of great social movements, and it is natural that the greater the movement the greater the 'great man' produced by it. Neither is Lenin isolated as the great man of the workmen's advance towards Socialism. There was Marx before him, and the place occupied by both Marx and Lenin in the dialectical process of the Socialist Revolution is not fortuitous. They both mark critical turning-points where 'quantity is transformed into quality' and the movement is raised to a higher plane; Marx—the transformation of pre-scientific Socialism into the historical science of Social Revolution; Lenin—the first conquest of power by the organized workmen. He is the individual expression of the October Revolution.

It would be interesting to draw a parallel in this respect between the two great Revolutions of history, the Russian and the French. Both found their embodiment in great men, but the former is embodied in the revolutionary, Lenin, the latter in the counter-revolutionary, Napoleon. (For it is obvious that none of the great revolutionaries of 1792-94—neither Danton, nor Marat, nor Robespierre, nor St. Just—were of the same order of individual greatness.) The

parallel is instructive because it throws light on the laws conditioning the rise of great men. The source of the difference is the essential difference between a bourgeois and a proletarian Revolution. A bourgeois Revolution is objectively different from what it is subjectively. For those who make it, it is the dawn of a new era of universal justice and of the happiness of the greatest number. But its objective goal is merely the establishment of a society fitted for the highest development of capitalist industrial enterprise. Hence the unavoidable tragedy of its idealist leaders: what they believe to be their goal cannot be attained by the means at their disposition. Thermidor is inescapable, and the ultimate outcome of the Revolution is epitomized in the restorer of 'order,' and not in the conquerors of freedom, in Napoleon and not in Robespierre.

The proletarian Revolution is subjectively the same as what it is objectively. The goal it sets itself is attainable by the means it uses. The end of the revolutionary struggle is the beginning of the age of Socialist construction. Its leaders are the heroes of victory, not of tragedy. Thermidor is only a bogey conjured up in the minds of men of little faith, who are dropped on the march (and thus on a minor scale become the tragic figures of the Revolution). The man who embodies the Revolution is Lenin, the demagogue of the revolutionary

assault *and* the first architect of Socialist construction.

Lenin laid down the principles and foresaw the course of Socialist construction, but he did not live to see it emerge from the stage of mere recovery from the wounds of war and civil war into the state where it would become able to 'equal and surpass' the economic achievements of Capitalism. In the last years of his active life he was happy to announce to the Soviets that it was at last possible that year to invest twenty million roubles in the construction of new power-stations. This was the first stone of the building of Socialist industry which is to-day rising with such striking rapidity. Lenin's twenty million have become four milliard roubles—the sum invested in State industry in the year beginning 1st October 1929. The last paper written by Lenin foresaw the rôle to be played by co-operation in the Socialist education of the peasants. 1929 saw the beginning of a stupendous wave of collectivization which has transformed peasant co-operation from an organization of marketing to an organization of production. The day seems near when collective farming will be the controlling factor in Soviet agriculture and a firm foundation for Socialism in the rural districts.

The successes of Socialist construction in the Union of Socialist Republics has still further increased that country's significance as the

pivotal position of Social Revolution in the world. The progress of the Soviet Union, compared to the underground and unapparent revolutionary work of the Communist Parties of bourgeois countries, tends to produce the impression that 'Russia' alone has received the impress of Lenin and is his only legatee. But this is only a transient stage, and the present state of things should not obscure the fact that Lenin worked for the world, and that his message was intended for all countries.

His message may, I believe, be expressed in the briefest form in the following five propositions :

1. The one evil is the exploitation of man by man ; the one task, to build up a social order in which there will be no room for such exploitation ; the one duty is to contribute to the fight for such an order ; the one standard for the judgment of human behaviour is whether it contributes to or hinders the cause of Socialism.

2. The industrial working class is the only class capable of attaining this end, but the cause is that of all the exploited. One must not be afraid of letting loose the revolutionary energies of the exploited masses, however destructive they may be. The Revolution must behave 'in the plebeian manner,' though this may wound the æsthetic and sentimental susceptibilities of intellectuals fed on the culture of the exploiters.

3. Revolution is an art and a science, to be

acquired by the Revolutionary. He must not do that which will give him emotional satisfaction but that which is best suited for the attainment of his ends.

4. Politically and socially the order introduced by the victorious Revolution will from the outset be superior to that of the bourgeois state, but, in order that it may become the stepping-stone to Socialism, the Revolution must be able to 'equal and surpass' Capitalism in the sphere of production. This can only be obtained on the basis of that spontaneous labour discipline that is inherent in the industrial proletariat.

5. This is the only way of putting an end to the exploitation of man by man and of attaining Communism, whose law is 'to everyone according to his needs, from everyone according to his abilities,' and which is the only form of society consonant with the dignity of man and of his further task of conquering Nature.

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The second edition, which will include much posthumous or recently recovered matter not contained in the first, and a much more elaborate commentary, was started by the Lenin Institute in 1926. It will consist of twenty-five volumes, of which Volumes i. to v., x., xiii., xviii., xx., xxi., and xxv. were out at the time of writing.

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